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The MASTERY

MARK LEE LUTHER

THE MASTERY

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BY

MARK LEE LUTHER

Author of "The Henchman," "The Favor of Princes," etc.

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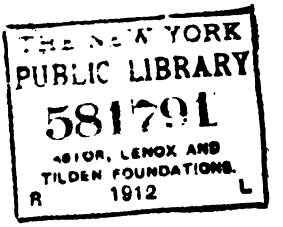

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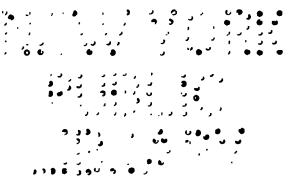

ПВКУВА
ЬПВПС
МЕЛЛОЬК

The Mastery

CHAPTER I

Two men who looked brothers, but were uncle and nephew, smoked in the shade of a deck awning of a Hudson River day boat.

"It will mean big money for you," said the younger.

"Yes," Philip Drew assented, "if politics doesn't queer the deal, I shall be a rich man."

"A millionnaire?"

"Perhaps." After a moment's revery he added half to himself: "A million dollars! I wonder what my mother would have said? Lafayette County thought father a Vanderbilt because he had fifteen or twenty thousand dollars tucked away in farm mortgages."

Young Harris was too engrossed with his personal day-dreams to speculate about his grandparents.

"I'll come pretty near moving into Easy Street myself," he laughed. "An uncle with a street

railway franchise can give a fairy godmother cards and spades."

"It's not ours yet."

"It is as good as ours with you pushing it, Philip. What you want, you generally get. Maybe when I'm a simon-pure magnate," he went on jocosely, "Katherine will deign to wear a solitaire."

Drew smiled indulgently over at the wholesome, clean-cut young fellow. He had been favored with many bulletins of this particular love-affair since its tropic beginnings at a watering-place two summers ago.

"Then it's not a bona-fide engagement yet?" he asked.

"I consider it an engagement. Katherine calls it an understanding — or did before she went to that New York finishing school."

"And now, Dick?"

"Now it's a misunderstanding apparently. She has me guessing. It's rather strange you two have never met, backing her father politically as long as you have."

"Men don't mix their families with their politics much. Besides, I've never been a carpet knight."

"That's just why you'll like her," Dick argued.

"Crusty bachelors are her specialty. Katherine's had an odd training. Barring those two years in the New York school, her father has had her education in his own hands, and this summer she actually served awhile as his private secretary. You'd look to find a blue-stocking in the daughter of a man old-fashioned enough to quote Horace in the United States Senate nowadays."

"Logically."

"Well, the illogical fact is that she's the jolliest blend of nonsense and horse sense sweet-and-twenty ever embodied."

"Hear! hear!" Drew applauded.

"Scoff, you cynic, scoff! We're younger than you."

"Yes; I mustn't forget that," said his uncle, soberly. "Isn't it time we sighted the house?"

"We'll see it as soon as we round the next point. There's a lot of stuff about it, by the way, in this new guide I picked up at the news stand. Listen: 'This storied region, teeming with quaint legends of the Dutch settlement and the later Revolutionary struggle, whose historic arena'— that's not where the thing begins! Here you are: 'Crowning the wooded point to the left, we glimpse the red roofs of "The Beeches," the well-known residence of the ex-Secretary of the

Treasury, John A. Wentworth, now senior United States senator from New York. This stately hall, suggesting in its appointments the country-seats of England, was, before the death of Mrs. Wentworth, the scene of a brilliant and lavish hospitality. Martin Van Buren, Daniel Webster, Washington Irving, Louis Kossuth, Jenny Lind, Charles Dickens, Dom Pedro, Emperor of Brazil, and many other celebrities, native and foreign, have, at one time or another, been here entertained. Although this gayer phase of its life is past, "The Beeches" yet enjoys the repute of a political Mecca, and within its walls —'"

"Bother the guide-book," Drew interrupted. "Here's the house itself."

The home defined itself rapidly. Bit by bit they distinguished the gray Tudor front, ivy-grown; the pleasant places of the gardens; a pergola heaped with vines; the ordered masses of the shrubbery, some late-flowering scarlet blossom salient; and wide reaches of greensward sloping beneath high-vaulted leafage to the water's edge. Then they swept by and on toward a headland, whose up-flung, wolfish muzzle, veiled with a light film of early September haze, set the horizon's boundary across the bay, and frowned over against the river town of Dutch name, ante-

cedents, and tranquillity, which was their landing-place.

"There she is! There's Katherine!" cried Dick, swinging his hat as the boat made her dock. "She's that stunning girl in a trap on the edge of the crowd. See! Her horse just shied."

"Rather stocky, reddish hair —"

"Reddish nothing!" snorted his nephew. "Katherine's hair is black."

"Excuse me, son," Drew rejoined mildly. "I meant the horse."

"Slender figure, duck suit," Dick particularized; "gray eyes, where you'd look for black."

In common with three crowded decks, Drew decided that Katherine Wentworth was superlatively good to see; Dick had a habit of falling in love with that sort of girl. In common with a lesser audience, some minutes later, he thought he detected on Dick's part a vain overture for a kiss.

"This is the venerable uncle I brag about," was Harris's informal presentation.

The girl thought Drew a far from patriarchal figure as she made a place for him beside her, and bade Dick dispose himself behind. In this she shared the usual first impression of those who had known the man only through his works.

But an hour before her father had spoken of the coming guest's precocious successes: how he had become district-attorney of his county at twenty-eight, his city's mayor at thirty; and how, in the half-dozen years since he quitted public office, he had filled a niche peculiarly his own in his party's state committee. And yet he looked scarcely older than Dick! Their likeness was marked. The same frank eye, strongly modelled nose, and firm, clean-shaven lower face distinguished both. Each also made the intangible, yet very real, appeal to the affections which men call magnetic. The resemblance ended where character began. The net impression conveyed by the nephew was one of buoyant promise. Drew's atmosphere was less volatile. One guessed that he had done things, that he would continue to do things.

At saying things the girl jumped at the conclusion that he was less facile. Drew was never at a loss to find some common ground with women of mature years, but he was a man's man, primarily, to whom girlhood was a sealed book, wonderful, elusive, a beautiful mystery. But Katherine, who was no mystery to herself, misunderstood his silence as during the brief drive she saw one after another of her conversational offerings languish to prompt extinction, unless bol-

stered by Dick; and she passed from wonder to pique, and from pique to a resolve that she would yet show this indifferent person that her wits were not beneath his notice.

As they wound a deep-shaded avenue into the grounds, they saw the senator advance along an upper terrace to meet them at the driveway. Dick lingered while a groom came to relieve Katherine.

"You've a very good-looking uncle," she remarked, following Drew with her gray eyes; "but doesn't he think girls know anything?"

"Eh?"

"He didn't seem to consider it worth while to talk to me."

"Oh, Philip is a trifle shy with petticoats," Harris returned carelessly. "What I want to know, Katherine, is why you snubbed me at the dock?"

"Snubbed you?"

"You knew I wanted to kiss you."

"How could I?"

"A girl who really cared would know. She'd expect it of me."

"How bold of her!" teased Katherine. "By the way, Dick, do you like my belt clasp? Uncle Austin sent it by aunt. Did I write that

Aunt Sue is here? The admiral picked it up in Rio Janeiro when his squadron touched there last spring. It's genuine Spanish Renaissance."

Dick ignored the trinket altogether.

"You don't love me," he accused.

She tantalized him with a mocking smile.

"You're a silly boy. When do you think you'll grow up?"

"You don't love me," he repeated tragically. "You've blighted my life."

"After dinner you will feel better," she reassured. "Try and pull yourself together now and meet a pretty girl. Harriet has come downstairs, I see."

Dick's drooping spirits underwent revival.

"Harriet?" he queried. "Who is Harriet?"

"The dearest girl in the world. But you've heard me speak of Harriet Reeves. My first year at the Sisters' school was her last, but I refused to lose sight of her, even when she exiled herself to a social settlement in the slums. Whenever I could drag her away from her street arabs for an afternoon, we would —"

"I say!" Harris ejaculated, his face reddening.

He retained the same fine glow, Katherine took note, as he stammered over the introduction immediately ensuing. It did not escape her,

furthermore, that a sympathetic blush, quite outdoing Dick's, dyed the cheek, forehead, and neck of the dearest girl in the world. Since social awkwardness was not one of Harriet's traits, and as Dick was neither by nature nor calling of a diffident humor, Katherine had her thoughts. When a light tap came at her door after the guests had been shown their rooms, she divined that explanations — or complications — were at hand.

"Come," she said.

Harriet Reeves entered swiftly.

"Katherine," she exclaimed, "you saw!"

"Yes, I saw. Moreover, I see! You're flushing still — adorably."

"Don't make it worse for me," protested the girl. She was of a dainty Dresden-shepherdess type of prettiness with delicate flesh tints which the rencounter below stairs had heightened captivatingly. "I assure you," she added, "it's quite bad enough as it is."

"You've evidently met Dick before."

"Yes, but I didn't know then he was your Dick — the villain!"

It was the dark-haired girl's turn to flush.

"Don't call him my Dick," she requested. "I don't claim proprietorship." She turned

away as she spoke and busied herself with the fastenings of her dress.

Harriet Reeves gave her a puzzled glance.

"I misunderstood," she said. "You're not offended, are you?"

"Of course not. Go on."

"He came to the Settlement when I was first in the work," Harriet continued, with a different tone, "and I happened to be the only one to see him. He said that he was on a New York paper, but somehow I — he —"

"But somehow you didn't mind that so very much? I understand."

"Katherine!"

"You're quite excusable. I know Dick's blarneying way."

"I suppose I was a goose to listen," Harriet admitted, "but he seemed so kind, so sympathetic, that in the end I didn't think of him as a reporter at all. In fact, I talked freely, showed him everything."

"And then?"

"Well, afterward, I found out that he only wanted local color for a Ghetto article. He sent me a marked copy."

Katherine paused halfway into a frock to vent a ringing laugh.

"Dick to the life!" she said. "Is that all?"

"All!"

"He didn't print your name?"

"No."

"Or your picture, surely?"

"Of course not."

"And wasn't it a good article?"

"Yes," Harriet conceded; "it was clever — very."

"Then I can't see that he's such a sinner. I dare say he flirted with you a little, but you mustn't mind. Dick flirts for the same reason that cats and dogs fight — it is his nature to. Be merciful."

Harriet refused to smile.

"You don't understand," she said. "I didn't realize it at the time, but when I talked about the Settlement that day, I simply turned my heart inside out to him."

"And for newspaper copy — I see."

"You can't know how I feel about the work."

Katherine was silent for a little interval as she moved to and fro before her dressing-table.

"Dick's not a hopeless reprobate," she said finally. "Indeed, in some ways he's one of the nicest chaps I know. Be as civil to him as you can."

Harriet went away presently, and her toilet complete, Katherine lingered a moment in her window, which embraced a wide and much-beloved prospect. Just beneath, in its old-time quaintness of box-edgings and labyrinthine paths, bloomed the garden, planted year upon year as Wentworth's wife had loved it. There were rose trees which she had tended; the vermilion bands of phlox might well have been her own; all the mid-century favorites — the hollyhocks, the peonies, sweet marjoram, sweet william, thyme, larkspur, lavender, flower-de-luce — each in its season flowered in places which dead hands had appointed. At the garden's centre gleamed the white standard of a sun-dial. To the right and above the pergola ran from the terrace, heavy-freighted with ripening grapes. Spread out below was the river, glancing and shadowing as the day waned. Beyond all — beyond the terrace, the garden, the river — towered the distant Wolf's Head, its rugged cliffs burnished by the level western rays.

A blithe laugh drew Katherine's glance to the entrance of the pergola, and then she laughed too. It was Harriet practising civility toward Dick. Then from another quarter issued her father's quaint figure, flanked by Mrs. Austin

and Philip Drew; and as she perceived that the mute guest had found a fluent tongue, she laughed again.

"You'll talk to me yet," she said.

CHAPTER II

It was in the dozy hours of Sunday afternoon that her triumph befell. Mrs. Austin was napping; Harriet, tireless in good works, had vanished under shelter of the same parasol with Dick in the direction of the river. Chancing into the library, Katherine came upon Drew and her father with their heads together over a blueprint gridironed by railway lines and city streets.

"When I was a boy, sir," Wentworth was saying, "there were orchards where your city hall now stands. And such orchards! Heigh-ho! I'm an old man."

"Not old, senator, — ripe," Drew amended. "We'll demand a long pull in the harness from you yet. We'd have sent you higher if you had consented."

Wentworth smiled aside the allusion to presidential honors. His name had figured in the balloting of more than one national convention. Once, even, the nomination would have been his for the word, but that word had to him seemed to mean disloyalty to another, and he had reso-

lutely put the prize away. When he fell, it would signify the passing of a landmark. Successively representative, governor, cabinet officer, senator, and one of a triumvirate which the state's then dominant party obeyed as its pilots, he was none the less a picturesque survival from a bygone age. The statesman's traditions, his practice, his very manner of speech, antedated the War of the Rebellion. He was "your most obedient" upon introduction, "your humble servant" in his letters, while "sir" interlarded his talk as it did that of the contemporaries of Andrew Jackson and the younger Adams, whose fashion of neckwear, or a slightly modified variant, he quaintly retained. When he said, "Mr. Webster once discussed in my hearing," or "Mr. Van Buren, sir, assured me that Mr. Jefferson advised," a fold in the curtain of the past lifted, and the demigods of our political pantheon were seen to walk and talk as men.

In the moment of his tribute Drew at once perceived Katherine and the fact that she was no sharer in Wentworth's mellow philosophy. He had heard fantastic tales of the reliance which the great man had come latterly to place in this daughter: tales of their mutual devotion, of their rare comradeship; tales, too, that he scouted, of

her political sagacity. Yet none of them, nor yet his own hero-worship, quite prepared him for the passionate idolatry which at that instant, and for that instant only, leaped to its frank avowal in the girl's singularly beautiful eyes. He was moved by this revelation, and the wonder of it neutralized his chagrin at the interruption of a talk for which he had bided his time ever since his arrival. He had accepted this chance invitation to "The Beeches" with the thought that it might somehow further the topping enterprise which absorbed all his energies, the great decisive battle of his professional career.

Katherine was retreating when Wentworth spied her.

"Don't run away, my dear," he called. "Mr. Drew was just going to tell me about his street-railway war. I'd like to have you listen. You see, sir," he added, "Katherine has come almost to be my second memory."

The girl passed to a seat in the library's broad oriel, and Drew turned again to her father. Wentworth's right hand described an oratorical arc which the galleries of the United States Senate particularly admired.

"Now, then," he said, "the whole story, politics and all."

"We rather hoped to steer clear of politics," Drew prefaced; "state politics at least. After all, this project of ours is simply a business proposition. Two Rivers has grown like Jonah's gourd, and everything save the street-car system has kept step. The directors of the old company have had ample time to give the city the kind of service two hundred and fifty thousand people require, but they've done nothing. Neither do they want a new company to do anything. They're pained at our effrontery. But the public laughs."

"Is the press friendly?" Wentworth queried, absently twirling his glasses.

"You've touched the crux of the situation. We sounded the newspaper people at the right time, and they all promised their support. You see the monopoly has bullied us so long that there's not a sheet in town which isn't in the habit of printing a hot jeremiad every time an editorial writer happens to adorn a strap in the rush hours and have a fat woman trample his toes."

His exposition of the rousing of the press stirred a laugh in the window-seat. It ran a scale like a little chime, and amid the statistical lumber packing Drew's practical brain lodged the antic notion that he should like to touch its spring again.

"With one exception the newspapers made good their word," he went on. "The exception was the *Mail*."

Wentworth's far-away look narrowed with sudden interest.

"The *Mail*," he repeated. "Redfern's organ?"

"Precisely; James Y. Redfern's."

The old man stopped twirling his glasses.

"I don't understand that," he owned. "One of our own people!"

"Perhaps he wasn't let in on the ground floor."

Drew was astounded, for the quiet suggestion which broke the silence came from the girl. To what unclassified species of the genus woman did she belong? He threw her father a questioning look, but the senator seemed to take it as a matter of course. With fresh interest Drew recurred to the window-seat.

"I dare say Redfern would have settled rather cosily on the ground floor, Miss Wentworth," he admitted, answering her as he would a man. "The cruel phase of it was that he couldn't even burgle the back yard — no, not with a dark lantern and a jimmy."

"He didn't want stock then?" put in Wentworth.

"No; not stock," the lawyer answered. "It

was real estate options. It seems he made a bee-line from our confidential talk to the owners of unimproved land along the proposed right of way. His dreams must have been magnificent. He woke, however, to the fact that somebody else with a taste for options had got out of bed a little earlier."

Katherine laughed again, and Drew let fall a slow smile at her quick-witted appreciation. The window-seat became a point of orientation.

"We're not posing as philanthropists," he added. "We shall make a dollar wherever we legitimately can."

"It is cheap wisdom to tell you that you should have thrown a sop to Redfern's vanity," observed the senator, gently. "His influence undoubtedly carries weight in Lafayette County — and elsewhere."

"I don't set up to be much of a politician. The affair began as business, and whatever our party associations, Redfern and I have had no commercial dealings. In business matters I don't tie up to firebrands."

"Firebrand! Aye, so he is — brilliant, useful in season, yet a menace."

"He is the brains of the fight against us. So far his hostility has run to mischief-making

among the property owners and we've had injunctions to vacate. But the real danger, as I see it, is the importance which the state board of railroad commissioners may attach to these cooked-up protests when we come to ask their consent. Redfern is clouding the issue with politics, and politically the board is an enigma. If possible, senator, I'd like to make a draft on your influence to insure us fair play."

Wentworth brought himself back from one of his meditative flights.

"You would better see Spedding," he said, after a little formula of his. "Spedding is on the ground."

Drew reserved the information that the master spirit of state politics had already been seen. A Wentworth man, so-called, he had nevertheless cultivated close relations with the Triumvirate's presiding genius. Wentworth was a triumvir by grace of statesmanship; Spedding through a sort of apostolic succession from a famous line of political adepts who for generations had made Albany their fulcrum; the third member, Maddox, was a New Yorker in residence and rule. Once the group had included a fourth member in the person of a former colleague of Wentworth's, but a general landslide some years since had

temporarily loosened Spedding's hold upon the Legislature, and the present junior senator belonged to the other party.

"I should like to enlist you both," Drew pursued. "I think a word from you or Mr. Spedding would clear the atmosphere. If the commissioners could hear our case wholly unbiassed by friendship or party affiliations, we should fear nothing. But that is asking too much of human nature. One of our 'three fates,' I learned lately, owed his first chance at the public crib to Redfern, and he's not forgotten it. Another of them, as we know, is so amiably disposed toward all mankind that his backbone has become a fluid. But to me Poole seems the prize conundrum of the lot. How can we best reach one who is not a politician, not an up-state man, not even of our own party camp?"

Wentworth considered.

"Of course there's Mr. Maddox in last resort," he offered tentatively, "but—"

"Just so—'but,'" smiled Drew.

Katherine watched this interchange of half-expressed opinions curiously. Her father's friends always took this ambiguous attitude when the metropolitan leader's name came up, and for all her alertness she had never quite made out the reason.

"Poole?" ruminated Wentworth. "I don't think I ever had speech with him. You see, sir, I don't meet these men as Spedding does. Who were his sponsors?"

"Labor organizations in general — he's the labor member, you'll remember. In particular, a district leader in New York City — "

"Named Reeves?" supplied Katherine.

Drew stared into her eager young face in frank amaze. Wentworth himself seemed puzzled. She slipped from her seat and came forward smiling at their bewilderment.

"It's not sorcery," she laughed; "just coincidence. Your Mr. Reeves is Harriet's father, that's all."

"Bless my soul!" ejaculated the senator. "So he is. I'd forgotten it completely."

"I've heard her mention Mr. Poole scores of times," Katherine went on, "and if I'm not greatly mistaken, he's her godfather. At any rate he's an old friend of the Reeves family and has petted Harriet since she was a baby. Now if you — " she paused, smiling from Drew to her father, and from Wentworth back to Drew; then with a wave of color she impetuously ended, "Will you let a girl try what she can do?"

Wentworth continued to bless his soul, and his glance sought Drew's, but the lawyer's face was a riddle.

"Really it does seem feasible," the old man reasoned. "They're human, these men, as you say, sir, and unconsciously the things which interest our friends — ah, but it's a delicate mission, my little diplomat!"

"I know I can manage it as it should be managed," Katherine answered with quiet confidence. "It will not seem to come from you, father; nor from you, Mr. Drew. Just one girl's chat with another, you know."

"Well, if Mr. Drew —" Wentworth hesitated with a laugh.

Katherine swept round upon the guest like a young whirlwind, her eyes a petition, her smile a challenge.

"You don't believe in me," she taunted.

"But I do," the man found himself protesting fervidly. "Indeed I do, and here's my hand upon the compact."

He discerned presently that something outside and beyond pure reason had won him to this astonishing alliance, and was at pains to tell himself that it was because they two had somehow gained the breeze-swept plateau where men meet men.

CHAPTER III

DREW appreciated her practicality better at evening. He and the senator were chatting in the twilight upon an ancient seat of yellowed marble which in the heyday of his remote honeymoon Wentworth had ravished from an impecunious Italy. Fragments of the talk of Dick and the girls, who were making a slow detour of the redolent garden paths below, filled in the pauses of the old man's reminiscence.

"You see," Harris was setting forth, "I look after the literary bureau, which is something that no scheme involving millions can very well get along without. The enemy took me as a joke at first, but they've had to hire another newspaper man to offset my work. Like the successful breakfast foods and hair tonics I'm being imitated. Oughtn't people to use their own judgment?" he echoed a remark of Harriet's. "To be sure they ought, but they don't. The average man lets his newspaper do his thinking. I would be ruled out of *Looking Backward* and all the other

Utopias, but you'll find the press agent warbling his tuneful lay in *this* world yet awhile. You bump against funny things in these big deals," he pursued,—"dramatic things, sometimes, which the novelists ought to annex. Why, only the other day—"

"And that reminded Mr. Lincoln of a Sangamon County story," Wentworth reclaimed Drew's vagrant attention.

The young fellow's talk was still of the great enterprise when he came again within earshot, and as Harriet's sweet laugh followed a sally of Dick's which Katherine's light spur prompted, it dawned tardily upon Drew that the flank movement for the capture of Fort Poole had already begun.

Katherine smiled when he let her know that he had overheard.

"Yes," she said, "Dick is very effective as an unconscious missionary."

"Would a word from me do any good?"

"Dear no! She thinks it's the street railway she's interested in, but it's not — that is, not yet."

"You mean—"

"I mean it's Dick's breezy style of telling things," Katherine replied. "Girls always take to Dick."

Drew saw the gulf yawn which his nephew's "We're younger than you" had disclosed yesterday.

"I understand," he returned.

The girl seemed with her quick intuition to feel the passing shadow which the man supposed hidden.

"But you can help in another way," she at once added.

"How?"

"By staying over to-morrow — Labor Day — as you were invited to do. I gathered from Dick that you thought of running away after breakfast. Now wouldn't that be a blunder? To-night Harriet is merely an acquaintance of the railway; by to-morrow night she may be its fast friend."

"Suppose we leave the mercenary motive out," Drew rejoined. "I'll stay because I'd like to stay."

"That's splendid," exclaimed the girl, enthusiastically. "Now I can have the cat-boat out again. Father has felt timid lately about my going out alone. Dick told me that you're fond of sailing. We'll beat a few miles past Wolf's Head to-morrow morning if the wind is right, and run home in time for luncheon."

On Katherine's bringing up the project at breakfast Wentworth said that his sailing days were over; while Mrs. Austin declared that, as a chaperon, her usefulness ended at the water's edge.

"It's a humiliating thing for a sailor's wife to confess," she said, "but even a ferryboat can make me unhappy."

Dick suggested that she might keep an eye upon them through a telescope.

"An old tabby at Bar Harbor," he unfortunately went on, "once saw a proposal in that way."

"This old tabby won't resort to such extreme measures," Mrs. Austin rejoined grimly.

Katherine marshalled her little party betimes at the dock, where the speckless boat courtesied on the swell cast by a passing steamer, and with Drew's help made the preparations to embark. He saw that she touched each thing about the boat as if she loved it.

"Now since you're a yachtsman, Mr. Drew —" she offered when all was ready. "Dick isn't, I know."

"Can't tell a spanker from a spar," confessed Harris without shame, as he escorted Harriet with pomp and circumstance to a seat.

"And I'm little better than a landlubber," Drew modestly disclaimed. "Let me watch you handle her, Miss Wentworth."

Katherine's eyes sparkled as she gathered up the tiller ropes.

"Very well," she said. "I'll be captain. Don't mutiny if I treat you as mere ballast along the windward rail when she takes the bone in her teeth."

From his vantage-point as "mere ballast" Drew bent an interested eye upon his superior officer. Her untrammelled head, her neck, her arms, bare to the elbow, were all browned by months of outdoor life, but the tan could not hide the ebb and flow of the warm tide which raced beneath as she directed the half-animate creature so sensitively responsive to her lightest touch. Its moods were her moods. When it flagged, she flagged too. When it squared away in some stirring flight, reef seemed to follow reef in the girl's spirit.

On the homeward run the wind dropped, and, after fluky perversities which baffled Drew's and Katherine's united seamanship, failed altogether. The day, like yesterday and all early September, was of a piece with August, and great lazy masses of white cloud defiled continually from east to

west across the blue. Yet the lower atmosphere was still. For a full hour the cat-boat drifted becalmed in the shortening shadow of Wolf's Head, while out beyond in the piping heat, now first felt, the broad river seemed fairly to steep.

"We'll simply have to take to the oars if we're to get any luncheon," Katherine announced reluctantly, as Harriet finished a settlement story. "Think of pulling home a twenty-footer in this temperature!"

Drew assented to her opinion.

"Dick," he asked, "can you row?"

"Whew!" sighed Harris, warming at the mere idea. "I thought this was a pleasure trip. Let's maroon the captain."

Katherine dipped a finger overboard and then held it aloft trying the wind.

"There's just a breath," she said, peering for a visual sign. Then, "Oh, look!" she exclaimed sharply. "Look!"

The turning tide, now setting gently downstream, had at length borne them past the cliff, and through a deep cleft in the hills the lower east lay exposed, a majestic battle array of leaden clouds each instant piling higher. A ragged violet flame rent the menacing mass, followed by the first dread organ note of the storm's prelude.

With a muffled exclamation Drew sprang for the peak halyard. Katherine dropped to the tiller, her face gone white.

"We must luff before it strikes," she called. "There's no time to lower the sheet."

There was time for nothing. For a little moment the pines on the great cliff droned like a giant bagpipe under the blackening sky, the eerie sound swelling in volume with added voices from rock and gorge and stream till all Wolf's Head seemed to snarl. Then the storm leaped full upon them. As he clung to the drunken mast, blinded by the furious onslaught of wind and rain, Drew saw what happened but dimly. It was a blurred series of instantaneous pictures: a straining sheet — two huddled forms in the cockpit — a girl's chalky face at the tiller — parting halyards — a wildly jibing boom; then the Hudson closed over them.

Drew rose easily to the surface and a vigorous stroke brought him alongside the capsized boat. Dick and Harriet, clinging to each other and a cork-stuffed cushion, floundered almost at his side, and with his aid laid hold upon the half-submerged keel. Drew struggled up the hull and searched the scene for Katherine. All round the river's plane was pock-marked by the hissing rain.

"Katherine!" He strove to shout her name above the yelling din.

No answer.

Dick and his charge now reached Drew's side and the three peered and shouted together, but the gale jammed their voices back in their teeth. Drew crawled farther up the hull and shook the water from his eyes. Then his glance traversed the flattened sail, comprehending, and instantly he dived. It was as still as the grave underneath after the outer tumult; cold as the grave were the fingers which met his. For a fearful instant, even, the grave's pallor seemed to have set its stamp upon the face he saw when sight again was possible; but clinging with his burden to the slippery gunwale he beheld the shut eyelids flutter, half open, droop languidly, then part wide. Katherine's eyes met his own.

"You do live!" he cried. "Thank God! Thank God!"

He got her upon the precarious refuge with the others. The wind had spent its first fury, but the rain still deluged down, and the crash and roll of thunder was incessant. Katherine roused under the storm's uproar.

"The boom," she tried faintly to explain. "It stunned me."

"Rest if you can," he bade her. "We won't sink."

She obeyed like a child, closing her eyes. Presently, on hearing Harriet's voice, she opened them again and looked at the girl as, supported by Dick, she kept her uncertain perch. For an instant, also, her glance rested upon Dick who called to her some cheery inconsequence to which she made no reply. Then her look came back to the man in the hollow of whose arm she lay.

"It was plucky of you to dive," she said slowly. "You saved my life."

"It was nothing. Anybody could have done it."

"You did," she answered; and her eyes again sought Dick.

The wind dropped, the downpour lessened, the sky brightened and then broke in sunshine; a rainbow built itself in the direction of "The Beeches" which a mist still veiled. To signal was futile, but current and tide were aiding.

"We'll ground near home," Drew predicted.

"Yes," Katherine answered. "The point always gathers in wreckage like an arm."

They could smile a little at their plight now that Death, a moment ago so near, had trailed his dark wings elsewhere. Harriet preened her

soaked plumage in comic despair, and laughed hysterically at the jokes which Dick found heart to crack. Katherine was irresponsive. In an hour the castaways drifted into shelter of a little cove on Wentworth's estate where the girl told Drew that she had once played at shipwreck.

CHAPTER IV

DREW arrived home with the early morning, and responsibility met him at the carstep in the person of a burly man with anxiety puckering a face meant for smiles.

"Powers above, Phil," he broke out, "but you're a comfortin' sight. It just rains trouble when you leave."

"Worried, McQuade?" asked Drew, shaking hands.

"Worried! It's of heart disease I'll drop b'fore this crool war is over. Th' old company's stolen a march. Two hundred of their dagoes began rippin' up Union Street this mornin' an hour b'fore th' whistles blew."

"What's that?" cried Harris, immediately alert. "They've made a coup?"

"I don't know about th' koo," said the Irishman, "but they're heavin' up th' pavin' stones t' beat th' band."

Drew was unruffled.

"The street needs a line," he remarked, striking through the station to the street.

"But — but —" McQuade sputtered.

"Cross-town facilities, as you've often said, are what the East Side wants most."

"But, man alive," the Irishman laid hold of his voice with a roar, "don't we want th' street?"

"Some of it."

"Then injunction th' devils! Give 'em back their own shot."

"That sovereign remedy for man and beast won't go here, Larry," Drew laughed. "They're well within their rights. They might have put their tracks there years ago."

McQuade halted to slap his leg.

"Then that's why my cousin in th' bureau of streets never tipped me off! Here I've been wishin' him hell-fire an' brimstone f'r not tellin' me what he didn't know in th' Black Cat saloon last night."

"Yes, they didn't need to give notice. But cheer up," he consoled. "Don't you see that this spasm of energy only shows their fright? Those two hundred Italians are our best argument. As for that street, we'll use all we need of it in any event. The law allows rival companies to operate over one another's lines for short distances."

"Hurroo!" McQuade exploded, his face clearing. "Sure it's a great head-piece you've got. May th' saints reward th' legislator whose big brain hatched that jool of a law!"

"You're merely thanking the incubator," Drew commented dryly. "Thank some railroad attorney with an axe to grind."

Harris left them to take a look at the seat of war. McQuade accompanied Drew to the clubhouse where the lawyer made his home, and sat with him at breakfast while he reported upon his own branch of the work which had to do with certain uncharted shoals and reefs in the board of aldermen. He and Drew were old-time allies. People were accustomed to trace the beginnings of the latter's success to a volunteer fire company of the sort which roughly define the social cleavage in rural towns. Two Rivers had rapidly outgrown this phase, but the organization captained by Drew became the nucleus of an amazingly loyal political following which expanded with the city. McQuade had belonged to the fire company in the simpler days and had cleaved stanchly to Drew's leadership since. He was himself a leader of no mean powers, and controlled absolutely the city's most populous ward. Various persons of superior culture wrote him

down for an illiterate heeler; his ward deemed him a statesman for whom no office was too good.

As the men left the club-house a handful of reporters waylaid Drew for his opinion of his antagonist's sudden feint. He greeted them each by name, detailed the law which he had merely outlined to McQuade, and improved the chance to smite the foe.

McQuade clapped his thigh delightedly as Drew ceased to speak.

"Put that in your pipe an' smoke it, boys," he charged the reporters generally. Then, singling out one man, he added, "An' you there, my fine buck, what hires out your brains t' that rag of a *Mail*, take a good long whiff."

Drew locked his arm into his friend's and essayed to end the interview, but the mercurial McQuade veered from good humor to wrath as he thought upon Redfern's perfidy, and lingered halfway down the steps for a final shaft.

"Th' *Mail!*" he jeered. "'Tis th' Female you'd best be callin' it, f'r an old woman it is — a slanderin', backbitin' old woman. A gang, it calls us. Well, it's a hag I call your Female."

He had the lung capacity of an auctioneer, and all heard who would. A passer-by left the sidewalk and strode up the steps.

"If you've anything to say about the *Mail*, Lawrence McQuade," he cut in, "say it to me and not to my reporters."

Drew turned leisurely upon the newcomer. He and Redfern had not met since their talk to which the editor had proved faithless. A man of commanding physique, with handsome high-colored features, and a blond beard warming into auburn, Redfern might have posed for the typical Teuton who feared, served, and mastered Rome. Physically, no less than by temperament, he bore out Drew's simile of the firebrand. He too had his definite place in party councils, and had once or twice in dubious years declined a sacrificial eminence on the state ticket. He had served creditably in Congress and was commonly thought to covet the governorship. A fluent, showy stump-speaker, he was known to the voters of many communities which merely heard Drew's name, but his influence was a negligible quantity in comparison. Locally the two men might be said to share the bailiwick of Lafayette County between them, though neither dreamed of setting up formal metes and bounds.

"Speak out," bade Redfern, imperiously.

With disgust Drew saw the reporters crowd round at a hint of a scene. Not so McQuade.

He had as pretty a taste in quarrels as Sir Lucius O'Trigger, and rejoiced hugely in his present opportunity.

"Glad t' see you I am, Mister James Y. Redfern," he carolled, stressing the first syllable of the surname offensively. "A warmin' sight you are of a cool mornin'."

"Cut the personalities, Larry," admonished Drew, in a low voice as Redfern's skin flamed. "We have no quarrel with Mr. Redfern. The policy of his paper is his own concern."

"Personal, is it?" roared the Irishman. "There's just one way of tellin' a lobster he's a lobster I know, an' that's t' spit it out. An' if his hearin's not good, I'll spell it f'r him: l-o-b lob, s-t-u-r ster, lobster!"

"Your orthography is on a par with your manners," observed Redfern, majestically, as the smile went round.

Drew now thought to turn the whole repugnant scene off with a laugh, but McQuade's momentum was too great for such shunting.

"Th' meanin' of your big word is beyond my poor understandin'," he retorted, "but t' th' plain yet elegant English of lobster, I'm thinkin' you'll tumble. An' f'r why shouldn't I say it? A gang, he calls us, with windy talk about depressin'

th' old company's stock, an' raidin' th' municipal threasury. He was ready enough t' strike hands with th' gang a few weeks ago, was Mister James Y. Redfern, whose word is as good as his bond I don't think."

Redfern mottled sickishly and Drew interposed.

"McQuade voices his personal views," he said. "Our company as a unit bears no honest critic ill-will."

"Honest critic — sure!" agreed McQuade, unctuously.

Drew's suavity was a livelier goad than McQuade's blunt weapon. For an instant Redfern was visibly swayed by the lust for brute violence. Then the man's will triumphed and he swung on his heel with a contemptuous shrug.

"There's a higher honesty than you can comprehend," he said loftily, an eye askance inviting accurate quotation by the press. "I dare break a promise which is better broken than kept. The *Mail* is the tool of no corporation. It is the People's paper. It will combat insidious sapping of the People's rights wherever it sees a lurking head to strike."

The thing had gone dangerously far before

such an audience, and Drew denied himself sarcastic retort.

"I'm due elsewhere, Larry," he said quietly. "Going my way?"

Entering his law offices a few blocks farther on, he induced a feverish activity among a staff of clerks who a moment since had whiled an elegant leisure in discussing the merits of last night's "show" at the Imperial Palace of Pleasure.

"Billy," he greeted a snub-nosed office-boy who was hiding a dime novel behind the letter-press, "call up the company's office and ask Mr. Harris to step over here."

The youngster obeyed with a swiftness which his employer alone could evoke. The "boss" to his thinking was the brainiest man in the two hemispheres. If called upon to name a second, he would have chosen Dick, who was at once his pattern and despair. He was grinning broadly at some quip of his hero when a quarter of an hour later he announced his coming at the door of Drew's private room.

"Well you *are* leading a life," Dick saluted his uncle. "Beautiful damsel rescued yesterday, fistic triumph to-day! To-morrow — but imagination halts at to-morrow."

"Sit down," Drew said gravely.

"What's at the bottom of this yarn about a shindy at the Valley Club? No less than three men stopped me to unbosom between your office and mine. One fellow said that McQuade struck Redfern. Another had it that James the Magnificent made a stately pass at you and was put to sleep by my beloved relation's retort courteous upon his solar plexus."

"McQuade got his Irish up," Drew explained tersely, slitting the envelopes of his accumulated mail.

"As the excellent Larry sometimes will."

"Redfern treated us shabbily, but it was poor policy to tell him so from the housetops. McQuade simply handed him the cue for an extract from one of his demagogic editorials."

"No sparring then? My uncle's pugilistic victory pure myth?"

"Your uncle will have his fill of fighting. I shall harvest McQuade's indiscretions. Redfern's vanity has been flayed raw, and I'm the one he'll blame for it. It was to me he broke his word."

"Couldn't plant a healthier grudge if you loaned him money probably," Dick observed with cheerful cynicism. "Well, what's the worst he can do?"

"The worst?" Drew's jaw squared grimly as in his mind's eye he reviewed the sinister possibilities. "But we won't fret ourselves with that," he went on quickly. "Dick, I want your expert opinion — your judgment as a newspaper man."

Richard Harris's alert young face recast itself along the keen lines habitual in working hours.

"Go ahead."

"About six weeks ago didn't you say you thought that the *Messenger* could be picked up?"

"Yes."

"What is your notion of the purchase price?"

"Ninety thousand, spot cash, was the figure at which the city editor told me he thought the old man would quickstep out of the counting room. In my judgment, though, he could be dragged to the door for eighty-five."

"Is it worth it?"

"Decidedly. Even at ninety I call it a bargain. All the plant needs is a better news service and a dose of progress. Think you'll buy?"

"Yes; I think I'll buy."

Dick's eyes widened as he grasped the significance of this move.

"You're playing the game to the limit, aren't you?"

"To the limit," Drew assented.

He put a series of searching questions about the newspaper's condition, told Harris without ceremony that he was through with him, thinned out his callers and his letters at the same time, made a luncheon engagement with the *Messenger's* controlling stockholder, and by the time coffee and cigars were served, had informally closed the transaction. Redfern's enmity had alarmed him more than he let Harris see. The editor's ardent devotion to the Plain People notwithstanding, it was the aggressively well-to-do section of the city which swelled the circulation of his unquestionably able paper, and as this fashionable quarter was the seat of the serious opposition to the new street railway, the capture of virtually the *Mail's* one rival in its especial field seemed to Drew a move of real strategic value. For the present he meant to keep the fact of his ownership secret.

The power of Redfern's hostility made itself felt when Drew's franchise reached the mayor, who let his public hearing drag to tedious length, and was in general so pliant under the buttonholing of the old monopoly's agents that Drew's colleagues took fright. Drew himself said little beyond expressing his confidence in "Jim," which happened to be the mayor's unofficial name. His Honor's last day for consideration fell on a

Monday in late October. On Sunday, while the church bells were active, he sat fidgeting with the ornaments of his library desk under the calm scrutiny of Drew.

"I know what bothers you, Jim," said the caller. "You want to drive a good bargain for the city, you don't want to cross swords with Redfern, and, finally, you'd rather like to oblige me."

The mayor shifted his position and coughed.

"I'd like to give satisfaction all around," he avowed.

"A natural frame of mind for a man aspiring to a second term."

His Honor went red.

"Oh, I make no bones of that with you," he answered. "Of course I want another term, and it's just my damned luck that the say of it lies with two men who are at loggerheads. You've been the making of me, Drew, and I'm properly grateful, but — hang it all! — I'm under obligations to Redfern too."

"You're in a hole."

"It's a bottomless pit!"

"Not quite. We'll throw you a rope."

His Honor caught at the suggestion.

"You'll agree to the concessions urged by the *Mail?*"

Drew gently shook his head, and Melancholy again resumed her seat in the mayor's characterless face.

"When I went before the aldermanic committee on streets, and accepted every condition which the city imposed upon the old company, whose franchise is ten times more liberal, you told the newspapers you were satisfied."

His Honor nodded miserably.

"But we went farther. We consented to a free transfer system, and you were more than satisfied with the city's bargain. Then Redfern began his daily preachment for your benefit. He knows that the city wants our road. He sees that out-and-out opposition is no longer his play. So, great and good friend of the people that he is, he lies awake nights to concoct socialistic restrictions which, if loaded upon us, will kill the enterprise. I know as well as if you told me with your two lips, that he has come to you personally and demanded that you refer the franchise back to the common council with his insane amendments. Well, Jim, you may do so."

The mayor's weak face slid into the disarray of total bewilderment.

"But you — you just said — "

Drew unfolded a paper.

"Here is our company's offer, in which we agree to accept the amendments. You'll find them all here: short-term franchise, privilege of municipal purchase at the end, three tickets for ten cents — not one of the *Mail's* ruinous conditions is missing. The aldermen will meet in regular session to-morrow afternoon, and you can then lay the matter before them. They will ratify the changes. In the evening the councilmen will have an opportunity to concur."

"The council has adjourned till Wednesday."

"Exactly. So you'll summon them to meet in special session. Your secretary can reach them all to-day."

"But if — if they should —"

"They won't," smiled Drew. "There'll be no quorum."

His Honor smiled too.

"I see!" he ejaculated admiringly.

"Therefore you, having done all you could to obtain the best possible terms, will wisely accept the next best and sign the original grant."

The mayor heaved a prodigious sigh.

"You *have* lifted an incubus," he said.

Drew had not finished.

"Should there be any talk of dark-lantern

methods, your record will shine bright and fair. As for ourselves, we'll attest our generosity by letting the offer stand open till the council's regular meeting."

In this electric atmosphere the mayor became acute.

"Ha," he cried shrewdly. "Again no quorum?"

"Oh, bless you, yes. They won't get together on Monday night as a protest against dictation on your part. Every councilman thinks he knows more than a mayor. But Wednesday will be another story. Yes, there will be a quorum."

"But no endorsement."

Drew laughed as he shrugged himself into his overcoat.

"It wouldn't surprise me if they failed to endorse," he said laconically.

CHAPTER V

WHILE mere aldermen or mayors were his chessmen, Drew played a game in which he was a past master. The state commissioners were another problem altogether; and as he did daily battle before them in the crowded, wearing days of early winter, and in turn studied the taciturn person who owed his rise in life to Redfern, then the man whose backbone had become a fluid, and finally the shrewd-faced, self-made Poole against whom Katherine had amiably plotted, his thoughts were not rose-colored by over-confidence.

Katherine was studiously holding her peace. Drew had neither seen nor had word from her since he left "The Beeches." He had at times tried to get Dick to talk about her, but the young fellow had become unaccountably silent upon the topic which once loosed his eloquence. The girl was often in Drew's thoughts. Even amidst the wordy wrangles before the commissioners her face would recur sharply etched. Sometimes he would

see her with the background of a mullioned oriel; now at the tiller of a flying boat whose caprices she shared; again with the look she wore as she came back to life in his arms; or yet again it would be the Katherine, all gratitude, from whom he last parted. No woman's face ever haunted him as did Dick's sweetheart's.

Just before the holidays he came unexpectedly upon her in New York. She was standing before an art-dealer's window in lower Fifth Avenue, and to his masculine eye presented a wonderful harmony of warm brown tones in fabric and furs. There were enlivening gleams of cherry where a fold of silken lining saw the light; cherry also flashed from her throat, and stole cunningly in and out of the distracting gear which crowned costume and woman. Her femininity was to the forefront then, and the man noted the graceful gesture by which she raised her veil with his first perception of its elusive charm.

"You think you ought to like it if Ruskin did," he suggested, "but candidly you don't."

"You!" Both hands went out to him as she swept round. "Why, only this minute I was thinking about you."

"And I," said Drew; "I was thinking of you."

He continued the same train of thought actively as they walked on together. The girl at "The Beeches" had seemed near akin to nature; this was another, an urban Katherine, not less natural, yet different. He learned now that she shared the clothes passion of her sex; that she was in the thick of a shopping pilgrimage with her aunt; and that not Washington alone, but also Europe, would very likely lift astonished gates.

"That's why I was idling before those paintings when I ought to be meeting Aunt Sue at the dressmaker's," she explained. "I'm brushing up for the Uffizi and the Louvre. Yesterday I spent all my spare moments in the Metropolitan."

"Dick hasn't mentioned your going abroad."

"Dick doesn't know. In fact it's still very much in the air. You see there's a chance that Uncle Austin will be assigned to the European station before he retires. If the admiral does get the plum, — which seems to depend on politics like everything else, — I'm to go over for a time with Aunt Sue."

"And leave the senator?" Drew doubted.

"I've a fine plot for making him fetch me back when Congress adjourns," she laughed. "Do you think he could stay away?"

Drew's negative was emphatic.

"If I thought so, I couldn't go," Katherine added, sobering with one of the swift changes of color which lent piquancy to all she said or did. "He has only me."

The man looked as if he thought "only me" signified infinite riches. He decided that he liked best to see her a little pensive. An instant later, when she smiled again, he decided that he liked that mood very well too.

"Were the commissioners just sphinxes?" she asked.

"Impassive as a row of bronze josses. Dick insisted that they weren't human. It was a human enough little drama we played for them, though."

"I followed it. Father takes one or two of your local papers. The *Mail* cartooned you as an octopus. Now you're just waiting?"

"Just waiting."

They had reached her destination. For a moment she stood without speaking, her eyes upon the glittering parade of the avenue.

"I saw Harriet Reeves yesterday," she said slowly. "Last Sunday Mr. Poole took dinner at her house."

"Yes."

His response shaved neutrality to the verge of indifference. He had not cared to bring this up himself. The initiative had been hers at "The Beeches"; it must be hers still. He had a vague dread lest she consider his service in the storm a mercenary claim.

Katherine's color underwent a quick transition.

"And I'll make no boasts," she said, with a little air of girlish pique. "Good-by."

The holidays came and yet the state commission gave no sign of rendering its decision. Drew appeared to borrow no trouble, but his associates daily ran the gamut of anxiety from tremulous hope to blank despair. It was a period of incessant and fantastic rumor, so keen had the struggle whetted the edge of popular interest. Young Harris tried to imitate his admired uncle's calm, but the stake was too great. The delay irked him waspishly and his optimism was at low ebb. He was continually questioning Drew about the available methods of appeal should the worst befall, and he spent long hours in his uncle's office library threading the mazes of railroad law. He had employed nearly the whole afternoon of the last day of the year in this manner, when about dusk he slammed shut a calf-bound digest at which he was staring with-

out seeing it, and bolted into Drew's private room.

His uncle glanced up from the day's grist of correspondence which he was signing.

"Three more, and I'll be with you," he said.

Dick watched him take his methodical way through the last type-written sheet, and as the office-boy carried the pile away to the copying-press, he bestrode a chair which he rode in the same movement to Drew's elbow.

"State secrets, boy?"

Dick rammed his hands deep in his trousers pockets and frowned.

"Do you know," he said, "I'm no longer sanguine of our getting a favorable decision?"

"So?"

"Moreover, Philip, I think you are not."

Drew swung round in his chair to look at him. He took an almost psychological interest in his clever nephew's mental processes.

"Why, Dick?"

"Oh, it's mostly intuition, womanish as it may seem. But all my reasons aren't as flimsy. It convinced me that the commissioners were of two minds when they raised the question whether they could approve part of a proposed system; and since it has been made plain that it must be

all or nothing, I've doubted if you were really as hopeful as you seem. Then there are political wheels within wheels of which I know little and you know a great deal. I have a notion that Wentworth's practical influence in the Triumvirate is less than is popularly supposed."

"You are quite right about Wentworth. He holds his place because of the splendid figure he cuts in Washington. He is really out of touch with the men of his party at home. His daughter probably knows the state better than he."

"What an impression Katherine made on you!"

"Yes," Drew answered simply.

Dick harked back to his fears.

"I dare say you didn't put all your eggs in the Wentworth basket?" he half queried with a sudden note of anxiety.

"I never put them all in anybody's basket."

"And you have in general as much influence with the Triumvirate as Redfern?"

Drew shrugged.

"The Triumvirate carries little weight with the railroad commission as it stands just now."

The young fellow bounced up, overturning his chair.

"I know right well you look for a turn-down," he cried. "Why don't you admit it?"

"I do admit it, freely, to you."

"There!" sighed Dick, happily. "Now we'll have a 'meeting of the minds,' as you lawyers say. I have grubbed railroad law all the afternoon, and not ten minutes ago I hit upon a scheme by which we can drive a 'coach-and-six' through an adverse decision and through James Y. Redfern too."

"Sit down," Drew invited, his eye lighting. "Sit down."

"It's as simple as sinning — when you see it; merely a question of putting isolated facts in harmonious sequence, the marrying of a law to the blushing bride of a condition it was born for, the — "

"Prune the flowers of rhetoric," counselled Drew, glancing at his watch. "You can out-Irish McQuade when the fit is on."

"Fact number one," said Harris, becoming concise. "An existing street railway requires merely local consent to extend its tracks. Is my law sound?"

"Yes."

"Fact number two: just such a railway straggles down the valley to the city line. The Peanut, as the farmers call it, has never declared a dividend worth mentioning; its tracks are two

feet under snow this very day; for six years and upward it has lain there simply begging to be bought. Now for what reason under the canopy shouldn't we absorb the Peanut and extend its tracks into the city over the streets we now hold under grant from the mayor and common council? Possibly we'd require a fresh franchise — you will know about that; but admitting that, the fact remains that the city and not the state would have the say of it."

"But how about increasing your little road's capital stock? You must ask the commission's consent to that, and to be consistent they'd refuse. What would be your resource then?"

"Bonds," returned Dick, promptly. "I'd build the road on bonds. You could float them if any man."

Drew leaned over and affectionately patted the young man's arm.

"I'm proud of you," he said. "You would have made me a tiptop law partner if you hadn't gone in for journalism."

Harris glowed under the wine of Drew's rare praise.

"But the Peanut!" he persisted. "Why not grab it at once? The old company may forestall us any minute."

"No; they'll not forestall us. There's a little obstacle."

"Obstacle!" Dick's face fell.

"Well, you see, we've already bought the Peanut ourselves."

Harris reddened and then laughed.

"You might have told me," he reproached.

"And have prevented you from thinking it out for yourself! That would have been no kindness. We only reached a definite arrangement with the stockholders to-day. The newspapers will trump it forth in the morning. Besides, you never asked me."

"You prefer to show people the finished product, I've noticed."

Dick's flash of insight tickled his uncle.

"Yes," he agreed, "that's my weakness. I've always admired Tennyson's decent reticence about the chips of the workshop."

The city was agog over New Year's at Drew's coup which he took pains to represent in the light of an expansion of his railway's aims. The enemy promptly denounced it as an attempt to sneak in by the back door, and immediately upon the meeting of the Legislature, Drew was confronted by a bill extending the powers of the railroad commission to thwart just such an expedient.

The same day saw the old company's stock soar eleven points, and stories of impending defeat were given serious credence by the press. The morrow wore an aspect yet more troubled, rumor following rumor till the night editions set forth the text of the long-withheld decision which stamped the blackest forebodings with the seal of truth. The application was denied by a vote of two to one, the dissenting commissioner filing a vigorous protest. The name of this lone champion served to paint a vivid little picture in Drew's mind's eye, — a picture of an eager girl throned in a window-seat; and while his co-workers filled his private office with their lamentations, he found time to indite a telegram whose blithe note, if known, would have aroused grave question of his sanity.

All the evening long till their papers went to press, the reporters on the morning dailies tore the round of Drew's haunts in vain quest of interviews. It was said that he had called his directors together in special meeting at his law office, but darkness shrouded the building. Another story had it that he was with the railway's president, but when the banker, who served as figurehead, had been trailed to the theatre and besieged between the acts, he disclaimed all knowledge of

Drew's whereabouts. McQuade apparently took his chief's disappearance as keenly to heart as the reporters themselves; the ignorance of the attendants at the Valley Club was abysmal; while Harris, discovered cue in hand under the same roof, had ears for no topic save bottle pool. Yet the selfsame Harris later took his way to an upper floor of the club-house and tapped at his uncle's door with every mark of assurance that he would be bidden to enter as he promptly was.

Drew was in house-jacket and slippers, his drop-light a dim green moon swimming through clouds of tobacco smoke.

"I know you hate to have business worries lugged up here," Dick apologized, "but this knockout of ours is no ordinary worry."

Drew pushed forward the cigars, and bade his caller forage freely among the litter of magazines and papers heaped around the light. Dick rummaged aimlessly awhile; then, tiring, began an equally purposeless prowl among the high bookshelves which were the simple chamber's one embellishment. It was the unacademic collection of a man who bought books without much regard for literary fetiches, yet a library of remarkable range notwithstanding. The nephew won-

dered, as he had often wondered, that one whose education in the word's narrow sense had ended with a state normal school should possess this many-sidedness.

"How do you do it?" he queried idly, sweeping the room with a gesture. "I plume myself if I keep abreast of the news."

"What should I do without it? That's the harder question. Here you see home, wife, child."

"Quiet family."

"Yes," Drew assented a little pensively; "dream-children are well behaved."

Harris was too full of youth and the moment's worry to reflect that his uncle had been unwontedly open.

"I'm blue, Philip, indigo blue," he sighed. "But don't think it's mainly because this setback has happened to the only railroad I ever helped promote, though I'll admit that's been a feather in my cap. I'm more cut up because such a reverse has come to you. It makes my world seem out of joint. All my life I've believed it impossible for you to fail."

Drew was moved.

"Don't let go of that belief, boy," he entreated. "Don't, for my sake. Half the power of the

human dynamo springs from that source — some one person's belief in you."

"I never wavered till that bill was slipped into the Legislature. I would have staked my balance at the bank that you would win in the end. I know that you can handle aldermen, but a legislature is a different team of horses."

Drew glanced at his watch, rose at once, and, entering his bedroom, changed to outdoor garments.

"Travelling to-night?" Dick questioned, glancing at his bag.

"Yes."

Harris watched the dawn of Drew's slow smile.

"Philip! there's a ray of hope?"

"Well," Drew said quietly, "I can at least run down and see the driver of that other team."

CHAPTER VI

DREW bent his steps in the direction of the building which lifts its gables above all other Albany roofs. A little short of the capitol he diverged under the snow-sheathed elms to a quiet street of old-fashioned dwellings, before one of which he halted and lifted a knocker of quaint design. The householder's doorplate read "Henry Spedding" in small script.

The maid who took Drew's card led him straightway into a sunny breakfast room where an elderly man with beautiful white hair and striking features sat over his newspaper and coffee.

"So here you are?" he called. "I waited breakfast half an hour and then fell to without you."

"I hoped you would when I found the train was late. A cup of coffee will suffice."

Spedding ignored his suggestion.

"Fetch everything which hasn't congealed," he told the servant. To Drew, as soon as they had the room to themselves, he said: "You have

put up a fight which warms the cockles of my heart. Why the devil don't you pay more attention to politics?"

"I've found corporation law fairly exciting."

"Wasted talent, wasted talent! Unless you need the money, which I doubt?"

"I shan't lack money if my railway goes through."

"And later?"

"Just now I'm all in the present. The railroad commission has cut out work for me with a liberal hand."

"The adverse decision? Yes; that's awkward. The present board is — er — well, a little beyond the radius of my sphere of influence. I arrived home from Washington last night not ten minutes ahead of your telegram, but I've had time to run through their opinion. I should diagnose it as a case of fuddled conscience. Some queer wrinkles in human nature, aren't there? I don't doubt the commissioners are as honest as daylight, but in this case they've shown about as much judicial poise as a common cop. Poole alone knew wheat from chaff and stuck to his convictions in a way that surprises me. But the courts will unravel the skein if you find it necessary to press the fight that far."

"So I think, and an appeal is under way. But that doesn't prevent my taking a tender interest in Senate Bill No. 203 which is meant to block our extension of the Peanut. That purchase was a war measure and we'll not press it unless we must. I don't think it will be necessary. It's that bill which brought me to Albany, and the same loadstone seems to have attracted Redfern and the old road's attorney."

"They drew it, of course," Spedding answered. "But here's your breakfast."

Drew could have foregone food at this pass, but he began to eat, and with all outward patience awaited the withdrawal of the servant and Spedding's issuance from a brown study. He was a frail old man to look upon, but no one made the mistake of supposing him senile. He had an eye like a live coal. When he spoke it was not of the bill.

"Drew," he charged, "don't let this affair with Redfern start a factional row in Lafayette. You made the county safe for the party. Don't spoil your handiwork. An enmity is a costly hobby in public life. Get together somehow before the next campaign."

"I have no objection, in a political sense. Nature never intended us for David and Jonathan."

Old Spedding laughed.

"Observe the amenities for the party's sake," he cautioned. "We need you both."

"And this bill?"

"Need not worry you. It will be short lived."

"Thank you."

"It can be most mercifully killed in committee perhaps. All shall be done decently and in order."

They exchanged smile for smile.

"How about a popular protest?" Drew asked. "You see it's a flagrant violation of the principle of home rule."

"Just so. Point that out to your press. Then you might arrange a spontaneous mass-meeting of your leading citizens to denounce both the decision and the bill. It would be easy, I should judge, to get the proper pitch of righteous wrath."

Drew's mind had already run ahead to that, but he kept it to himself.

"We'll send a protesting delegation if you think best," he suggested as they rose from table.

"By all means. And ring in a clergyman or two. They always look well in a bunch of outraged home rulers. Come up to my library while I show you a book bargain I picked up in

Washington. You'll remember that little shop on Pennsylvania Avenue near the Capitol?"

When Drew went away, the old man recalled him from the sidewalk to admonish: —

"Shake hands with Redfern before the primaries, mind you. Show a solid front to the common enemy."

Drew set Spedding's plan of action instantly in motion. The mass-meeting discharged its resentment with most satisfactory vehemence, and such a protesting delegation went down to Albany with the slogan of home rule as had not issued from an up-state city in years. Drew did not accompany his crusaders. His dæmon, sixth sense, what you will, had apprised him that he might expect developments near home, and presently the general staff of his law office received a shock. The attorney for the old company, who, according to the newspapers, was still lobbying in Albany, suddenly darkened the threshold of the outer office and was promptly admitted to Drew's presence.

"It strikes me that it's about time we got together," said the newcomer.

Drew pushed forward a cigar box.

"Smoke?" he inquired.

And the caller remarked that he didn't care if

he did. By such simple preliminaries was ushered in the enemy's capitulation.

In the room without speculation was feverish. From a laugh which penetrated the panels of Drew's closed door the bookkeeper argued harmony; and harmony, thought the head stenographer, who began sharpening pencils against a speedy summons, meant a deal. The managing clerk knit his brow impressively when asked his opinion by the young gentleman who kept the register of cases, but in reality he was no wiser than the office boy. When the door did open, it merely emitted two men who were talking of lunching together at the club.

While the reporters were trailing nimble rumor, and the *Mail* was forging a thunderbolt entitled "Sell-Out or Combine?" with gloomy prophecies of the crucifixion of the public at the hands of these enemies turned friends, Drew again slipped quietly out of town. When he returned, the great prize all but lay in his hand.

"A bill which straightens everything was introduced this morning," he told Dick. "I trust the governor will be as prompt as Spedding assures me the Legislature will be."

"Isn't the governor a crony of Redfern's?"

"Yes, but friendship won't tempt him to try

a fall with the Legislature while his own pet measures are hanging fire."

"Then if it's come to that, I move we sacrifice a bottle and a bird."

They sat late over it, and Drew disclosed a long-budding plan which assured success had brought to flower.

"When you threw up your New York work to go in with me, Dick," he said, "I told you I'd make it worth your while."

"And you have. What with my stock, and the real estate tips you've given me, I shall clean up a tidy sum."

"I don't mean that. I refer to the *Messenger*. It occurred to me a long while ago that I'd like to control a newspaper here, but I didn't look to pick one up just as I did. Now that I can take over the plant openly, I mean to put you in charge."

Dick gripped his hand.

"Philip!" he cried, "you don't mean it?"

Drew maintained a smiling silence while his nephew's delight effervesced. When the first rhapsodies had spent their energy, he added gently: —

"You see, boy, I'd like to put you on a footing to marry Katherine."

Dick blushed like a débutante.

"You're a brick, old man," he brought forth huskily, "but — but —"

Drew pretended not to notice his brilliant color.

"I want you to be able to offer her the sort of position she deserves," he went on. "Katherine will make no ordinary wife, Dick. She has all the fresh young loveliness and charm of a girl, with the brain of a clever, a very clever woman. Nobody ever made quite the impression upon me that she has, which is saying a good deal for a confirmed bachelor. I like her tremendously. You're a lucky dog to get such a girl to care for you."

"But she — that is, I — I'm afraid she doesn't," Harris stammered, fingering the stem of his glass with deep embarrassment. "In fact it's all off."

"Off?"

"Our — our understanding, what there was of it."

"Then hustle around and patch it up again," Drew counselled briskly. "If a man wants a thing and hammers long enough, he generally gets it — at least that's my experience. Don't lose a minute in beginning, and don't stop hammering till you win."

Dick squirmed miserably under this application of business push to affairs of the heart.

"She has sailed," he temporized.

"But you can write or cable. What do you say, for a starter, to cabling her that we've won our fight? She'll get it as soon as her vessel touches Queenstown."

Harris was still ill at ease.

"You cable, Philip," he suggested desperately. "It would please her twice as much. She admires you."

CHAPTER VII

It was far from Drew's thought that he should presently follow his cablegram. Unforeseen results of his victory, however, were continually cropping out. Thus, he received and declined a high-salaried office in the employ of a vast trust whose directorate, alert for talent, had followed his late exploit. The money did not tempt him, and of responsibility he had, just now, enough, but the recognition was sweet. An imaginative man, it was a fillip to his fancy to know that he was deemed a power by the powerful, a definite factor in the world of large affairs.

In the stress of the fight he had promised himself a vacation, but he only laid hold of it at the last because it came in the guise of business. His sortie into the street-railway world had brought him close to men of like interests elsewhere, particularly in New York, and this association in turn led him yet farther afield, since these metropolitan allies were planning an invasion of one of the provincial cities of England. Hence it fell out that one spring day, at a scant week's

notice, he and two keen-faced New Yorkers boarded a Liverpool liner.

The main object of the journey was soon accomplished, and the New Yorkers fared away by the first steamer homeward bound. Drew lingered, charmed by England at its friendliest. In London, where the final negotiations were made, he had met a group of gentlemen with family names familiar to history, whose simplicity was a thing after his own heart; and these acquaintances, among them, put him in the way of royalty laying a cornerstone, an important parliamentary debate, and many little courtesies of the clubs. It was a broadening experience, all in all, quickening racial ties of which he had taken little thought. When he actually ran upon a youth in the Strand whose boyhood had been passed in Lafayette County, Puck's girdle of the earth seemed a commonplace achievement.

It was during a solitary flight over the Continent that he felt an alien. Things somehow appealed merely to his head, and he hungered with a craving almost physical for American news. His laborious sifting of foreign sheets would yield nothing better than some impossible scrap about a man jumping Niagara Falls, while he pounced upon the Paris edition of a New York paper

with a daily zest equalled in intensity only by his daily disappointment. The stale files offered here and there by his bankers were his sole resource. A day dawned in Holland, however, when the European press atoned for many shortcomings. By merest chance he lit upon a paragraph which alluded to the attentions paid Rear Admiral Austin in European waters, with the pregnant statement that the now retiring officer, accompanied by Mrs. Austin and her neice, unnamed, would two days hence sail from Southampton for the United States. Its effect was electrical. He finished his luncheon within four minutes; he packed within half an hour; he embarked at midnight for Harwich; he sped with the morning across the Essex fens; at noon he walked away from the steamship company's London office with his passage engaged, and set about paying his parting calls.

On the morrow he scoured the Waterloo station for a glimpse of the admiral's party, till he was struck with the belated thought that inasmuch as Austin's flagship lay at Southampton, he and his were doubtless spending the last hours hard by. Why had he wasted the night in London! He was off at last. Homing now! He felt a vigorous lift in his patriotism and

scanned the faces of his fellow-Americans in the compartment for some sign that they felt as he felt. If they did, they were skilful dissemblers. Their talk was all of the customs ordeal already looming big at the voyage's end.

The liner had swung free of her berth and was gliding down the roadstead before Drew spied Katherine. She was in the midst of a little group beside the captain upon the bridge, among whom an oldish man with an iron-gray mustache and imperial was conspicuous. A huzzah, thinned by distance, drifted across the water, and the significance of the scene flashed upon him: the admiral was bidding his flagship farewell. Drew caught the gleam of the white battleship now, its decks and rigging black with the cheering crew. The liner's passengers began answering volley for volley. Now abreast, there came the rhythmic beat of music, martial music, and the colors of either vessel dipped. Then the pace quickened, the barrier widened, the man-of-war dropped swiftly astern, and the jackies' last cheer became a ragged echo muffled by the pulse of the liner's screw.

"The real thing, eh?"

Drew turned upon one of his fellow-passengers of the train.

"Why didn't you cheer?" beamed the man. "Patriotic frog in the throat?"

"Yes."

"Ditto here. It jumped in when I caught sight of Old Glory back there. Ripping fine flag when you see it away from home. Makes you forget all about the lynchings in the Black Belt, and the boodling everywhere else from Maine to Texas. Boss thing to have a country, after all. Join me in a cocktail?"

Drew evaded his hospitality and presently his company, but he took no step toward Katherine. The moment had had a message for him alone. He faced one of life's verities. He knew now that a lure mightier than business had drawn him abroad; that he had searched museums, palaces, cathedrals, for a masterpiece he had not found; that his patriotism even was mixed with alloy; that under love of country masqueraded a compelling passion for his countrywoman there aloft — Dick's sweetheart! The enormity of his conduct could at that moment have scarcely seemed to him greater had she been Dick's wife.

In the end it was the girl herself who sought the meeting.

"Aren't you a wee bit ashamed of yourself?"

came a low voice beside him at the rail toward sundown.

Drew spun round and caught the outstretched hands.

"I saw you leave the dining room and spoiled one of uncle's best stories to run after you."

"You aren't spoiled at any rate," said the man, and, still holding her hands, marked a dozen witching hints of womanliness which the months had added.

She cut these cataloguings short and released herself with a frown which was two parts smile.

"You don't deserve a welcome. You were days and days in the same London with me, not long ago, and never even left a card. Oh, one of your railroading Englishmen exposed you."

"You in London — last month!"

"Don't try to humbug."

"But I didn't know —"

"You're making it worse. You'll say next you didn't know that I was presented."

"Presented?"

"The Queen — court train — low neck — kiss hand — back out! There's the whole story in words of one syllable."

"I saw few English papers."

"I'll forgive you that. It's to-day that's unpardonable. To spend six livelong hours aboard the same ship and never so much as shake hands! Perhaps you'll say again you didn't know. And I used to be simple enough to believe you knew everything. Haven't you even looked at the passenger list?"

"It's because your name is there that I'm here at all."

"For me!" A telltale wave of pink confessed her pleasure. "Oh," she added demurely, "you repented afterward."

He went deadly serious under coquetry.

"No, no," he protested. "It was no time for my greetings when you left the bridge."

"Poor uncle," Katherine said gently.

"And then you vanished."

"Aunt Sue is no sailor, as you may remember. She took to her stateroom before we passed the Needles. But it's father I want you to tell me about. I've missed him so! If I had dreamed of the extra session, I never should have left him. Tell me absolutely every scrap."

Drew retailed all his news of Wentworth and the senator's world, spinning out his budget with the veriest trifles for the sake of her changing moods which made him think of sunlight chasing

shadow across a May-day field. The coming of her uncle checked his fluency and as dusk fell she left them.

The two men paced the deck till bedtime, well pleased with one another's society. To Austin the civilian seemed the personification of common sense in his assent to the naval notion of America's proper armament; to Drew, who would have commissioned Noah's Ark had Katherine's uncle suggested it, the sailor was the jolliest of all sea dogs.

Before he turned in, Drew told himself that he must be very prudent. Neither Dick nor his own conscience should have cause for reproach. He repeated this injunction frequently in the watches of a somewhat restless night, and it was his familiar when he woke. It bore him company in fact until he came upon deck to find that, early as it was, Katherine had outstripped him. He surprised her clinging to a capstan with her gray eyes full of some sea mystery, her cheeks blowzed, her wraps streaming like the draperies of a winged victory.

"Do you see that grumpy sailor polishing brass?" she demanded. "He has all but boxed my ears for coming out. 'It's rough,' says I, very affable. 'Too rough for women-folks,' says

he, just like Dick Deadeye. And that's the end of the story."

"He looks like a pirate," Drew declared, offering an arm. "Come, have your walk in spite of him."

It was a tipsy performance to watch, if the misogynist and another tar lashing fast a stack of steamer chairs gave their trivial movements a glance, and their talk was as broken as their steps. Syllables, words, whole sentences scurried down the wind, but with eyes, lips, shifting color, and an astonishing dimple for interpreters, Drew wasted no regrets upon lost parts of speech. When the ship's bugle fluted faintly below, they ran a race to breakfast like the children which by some kindly sea-change both had become.

In the companionway he was told all he was ever to know of the beguiling of Poole.

"You see," Katherine explained lucidly, "I had only to interest Harriet and then trust to her interesting him. It was very simple."

Her reticence struck a kindred chord in him.

"Simple," he laughed. "Yes; as simple as Woman."

During the next day, the next after, the next, and yet the next, the prosaic floating hotel presented itself to Drew's vision as a sort of golden

galleon. Mrs. Austin still kept to her state-room, and Katherine's hours upon deck were unhampered by even the mere pretence of chaperonage which does duty upon the high seas. Many men of many sorts profited by the aunt's laches, but Drew saw himself favored before all. They met at all hours, tried the ship's amusements from shuffleboard to betting on the run, read together, talked together, were eloquently silent together. An infinite number of Katherines, as various as her moods, showed themselves to Drew, and were all and singly adjudged delightful. Daily he reminded himself that he must be prudent, and daily he persuaded himself that he succeeded.

Then the unexpected befell. It began with a certain preoccupation on the captain's part at the mid-day meal. This particular captain was not prone to self-communings at table. Indeed, he was noted among the globe-trotting public of two hemispheres for his social faculty and lively wit. At present he refused to sparkle, and the admiral, who sat at his right hand, bore the brunt of a conversation which a vivacious widow from St. Louis maintained at concert pitch. Perhaps two hours later a steward brought a note to the admiral, who was then in the smoking-room di

coursing of tarpon fishing to Drew. Austin excused himself and vanished in the direction of the captain's cabin. It was a lengthy interval before he reappeared, and then he too seemed preoccupied. The captain remained invisible.

Throughout the afternoon the admiral paid visits of varying length to the mysterious regions of the ship which unprivileged voyagers do not penetrate. The captain did not present himself at the evening meal, and even the admiral was distrait under the widow's blandishments. Upon regaining the deck he at once resumed his little journeys.

About sundown Austin invited Katherine to take a turn with him, and when this brief promenade terminated with the girl's disappearance below, he looked about for Drew. It was not, however, until they gained a secluded corner aft between one of the ship's life-boats and the rail that he had more than monosyllables to offer. Then: —

"There's mischief going on down there," he said with a deckward jerk of his thumb. "The fact is they're fighting a nasty fire."

CHAPTER VIII

THE admiral scanned the younger man closely as he made his announcement. Drew's cool "Since when?" seemed to meet his expectations.

"They discovered it this morning between the first and second bulkheads, and at first tried steam in the hope of saving the cargo. Since noon they have been pumping water into the compartment, but the blaze is hard to reach. The captain told me what was up shortly after dinner. Level-headed man, that captain! Doesn't need anybody's advice. If it can be handled, he'll do it."

"There's a chance that it can't?"

Austin nodded.

"In my judgment, yes," he said. "That's why I told you. If it comes to a pinch, we'll need cool heads among the passengers as well as in the crew. There are sure to be some beasts aboard we'll have to knock down when the life-boats are manned. The women and children must have first chance."

"You told Miss Wentworth, I think?"

"Yes. I count on her to manage Sue in case — in case — well, you understand."

Drew's glance travelled unflinchingly along the line of life-boats upon the davits, which to his landsman's eye seemed so grossly inadequate.

"I understand," he said.

"It occurred to me, you see, that Sue might foolishly take it into her head to hang back for me."

The stout-hearted veteran went below to his wife and Drew stood grave-faced with his thoughts. He looked again at the boats and the life-rafts; then into the teeming steerage, here visible; and from the emigrants to the boundless sea. Granted that the cockleshells safely launched would hold that life-avid throng, what was the chance out there! He turned upon his heel, and, making his way to the smoking-room, sat down at a little table. There was drinking and jesting all around him, and a card game was in progress at elbow. In a far corner a man was discussing politics as vehemently as if such things really mattered. An hour hence would any of them care a straw for the next presidency which so excited them, the highballs they drank with such gusto, the miraculous royal

flush which had just electrified that poker game? Drawing some sheets of letter paper toward him, Drew began to write.

When he returned to the open it was night. Austin was pacing the deck. Katherine stood at the rail with her eyes upon the long opaque swell of the sea, and he saw that she was very pale. She turned as he came to her, and they exchanged an understanding glance. For a time neither spoke. Speech seemed a futile thing. What could words avail? What else could they do but wait?

But silent waiting grew intolerable to Katherine.

"The admiral says that such a thing may go on for days and yet the vessel reach port," she said.

"And sometimes —" Drew bridled his tongue abruptly. Could not she picture the hideous possibilities for herself?

"It is a strange thing that we should twice face death together," spoke the girl. "Is it fate?"

The man made some incoherent answer. His eyes held her in an impassioned scrutiny. A flare of yellow light from a door flung suddenly outward spun them round. The captain's figure silhouetted itself in the doorway, and Austin darted forward. To the watchers that unheard

colloquy seemed fraught with sinister meaning. The cabin door slammed shut.

The girl shivered.

"It has come," she whispered. "It has come."

Drew's fingers closed upon hers in the darkness.

"Katherine," he said hoarsely, "Katherine, there's something I want to intrust to you. I may not have another chance. It is a letter."

"For Dick?"

"For you!"

The captive hand stirred suddenly; then for an instant gave clasp for clasp. In silence she took the missive and placed it in the bosom of her dress.

"If this should prove — good-by," he added, "read."

Then the admiral bore down upon them.

"Out of the woods," he called cheerily. "Out of the woods."

Katherine caught his arm convulsively.

"It's under control?"

"It's out, my dear. Every spark! Now let's turn in and get our beauty sleep."

Under cover of the darkness a paper was slipped into Drew's hand.

"It's good night — not good-by," said a low voice.

Under cover of the darkness still, the unread fragments of a man's first love-letter presently fluttered over the rail to a watery oblivion.

They two were no more alone. By day the liner encountered a glassy sea below the Banks, the stewards removed the table guards, and Mrs. Austin reappeared in the world. The admiral's wife was the soul of courtesy to Drew, receiving him on the precise footing which his deserts warranted, but he was deftly made to feel that even a family friend might not see all he would of the family's flower. Nor was this all. He was convinced that Katherine welcomed the yoke of a chaperonage which, were she so minded, she could have easily evaded. He knew that she had not made a confidante of her aunt, since the admiral had requested that his wife be told nothing of the hazard they had run until they landed. This restraint, then, was of her own volition. It signified that she had understood. It was her answer.

With the morrow's daybreak came a wonderful scent of new-mown hay blown across the salt from the Long Island coast, and while the morning was yet young they docked. Senator Wentworth was at the pier and a bearer of unhappy news.

"Poor Spedding underwent a paralytic stroke a week ago," he said. "One arm lies useless. His mind, though, is as unclouded as this morning's sky. He has asked repeatedly when you would return."

"Dick could have told you. I cabled him before I sailed. I will arrange to stop at Albany."

"Do, sir," Wentworth urged. "And if you can meet him halfway in a matter he means to broach, it will rejoice us all."

Drew forebore to question, and if Wentworth meant to drop any further hint of the stricken leader's purpose, the joy of being again with Katherine put it out of mind. When he presently bore her away, it was with the engrossed tenderness of a lover. Drew set about getting his luggage passed by the customs and was laboring ruefully over his scattered belongings, when Harris suddenly hurdled a trunk and pumped him furiously by the hand.

"I thought I'd find you under 'D,'" he panted. "Should have waved my lily-white hand from the pier if a hot box hadn't held up my train."

Drew's color, which a refractory trunk-strap had freshened, went a shade deeper before these unconscious coals of fire. What would be his welcome if Dick knew!

"You've just missed her, boy," he said hurriedly. "She left with the senator not five minutes ago."

The young man was not appreciably bowed down with disappointment.

"Oh, I can look Katherine up at her hotel," he returned. "It's you I came particularly to see."

Remorse stabbed Drew afresh.

"It was thoughtful of you, Dick."

"Don't be too grateful. I planned coming weeks ago, but I didn't count on bringing bad news. It's important, however, and I think I'd better fork it over right here among the ruins."

Drew's faculties cleared.

"No; wait a moment," he called, darting to block an avalanche of clean linen making for the grimy planking under foot. "I don't mind troubles in battalions provided they attack in order. Just get a cab, will you, while I scramble these duds together?"

As their cabman threaded the maze of profanity and trucks without, Harris did his worst.

"You own a newspaper without news," he announced. "That's the boiled-down, concentrated, triple extract of my tale of woe."

"Our news agency?"

"Went completely to pot day before yesterday. Its customers have been simply stampeding to the Federated Press ever since you sailed. I cabled your London bankers just too late to overtake you. Long before I wrote you at Paris what I thought of the situation."

"I received no letter."

"No? Still chasing you, I presume. Anyhow it was merely a bulletin of failing health. Its news interest fades beside the death notice. You may remember that I suggested a change when you bought."

"I remember," Drew admitted. "And I meant to change. Other things interfered with my doing much for the paper. It seemed to be doing very well for itself. There were no danger signals when I left. The press association war was an old story. Nobody looked for a crisis."

"The end came with a rush. I foresaw the drift of things when I cabled for instructions."

"And lacking them?"

"We went ahead on our own hook."

"Right."

"And applied in your name for admission to the Federated Press."

"Right again. That was when?"

"The day before our association assigned."

"Yes. Go on."

"They refused a franchise."

"They refused *me!* Some of their chief stockholders are my personal friends!"

"So I discovered. They were honey-mouthed about it I assure you."

"But what excuse —"

"Red tape — iron-clad rules. They stuck to it that they were bound hand and foot. The objection of a single newspaper belonging to their association in our town is sufficient cause to debar an applicant. You'll readily guess which esteemed contemporary did the knifing."

"Redfern withheld his consent!"

"James the Magnificent himself."

"On what grounds?"

"Highly moral grounds of course. The *Messenger*, it appears, was bought up to serve as the organ of a shifty corporation — or something to that effect."

"No matter. What has the paper done for news?"

"Begged, borrowed, and stolen. We've had two awful days, as you'll understand when you see the files. I hadn't the brutality to bring samples. The fellows on all the papers except Redfern's did what they could in a quiet way.

The *Mail* isn't popular among the boys. So there's the situation at its rosiest."

Drew was silent, his eyes on the tumult of Broadway into which their carriage by now had turned. Harris gloomed out upon Broadway too, but found it for the first time barren of inspiration.

"Redfern certainly appears to have the whip hand this time," he offered dolorously.

His uncle made no response.

"But I dare say he is merely playing off till you arrive. He'll give in when you go to him in person, as I suppose you will be obliged to do? Won't you?"

"Eh!" Drew came out of his preoccupation.

"You'll see Redfern?"

"See Redfern! I'll see the devil first!"

"But—"

He went no farther. Drew was in crisp converse with the cabman. The carriage lurched round at the first gap in the traffic and began to retrace its course.

"Buckingham, Metropole, Grand," muttered Drew.

"Eh!" Dick came at him in turn.

"Victoria, Alexandra — it was something royal! S—— Didn't it begin with an *S*? Sa—Savoy! It was Savoy! W. Spencer Osborn, Savoy

Hotel, Victoria Embankment, London, W. C.— that was the whole lingo!"

"Willie Osborn — 'Little Lord Fauntleroy' Osborn! Did you see that sickening cad over there?"

But the cab stopped, and Drew had one foot on the curb before Harris made an end. Dick thoughtfully closed his mouth which Drew's precipitate flight had left ajar, and deduced what he could from the fact that his uncle had disappeared within the office of one of the transatlantic cables. He was not long left in suspense.

"And to think that that blessed boy almost cut me when I stumbled on him in the Strand!" Drew exclaimed gayly, reappearing at the carriage door. "But that might have been the fault of his monocle. It wasn't under perfect control. Hating America in general, Two Rivers in particular, and the newspaper his father founded most of all, — such was my countryman!"

"For the love of heaven, what does all this mean?"

"It means that I've come to believe in Chance. It means that I have cabled that expatriated ass an offer for his controlling interest in the *Post*, which carries with it a Federated Press franchise."

"Will he sell?"

"Sell! He begged me to find him a purchaser. Sell! His answer will scorch back at a gait that will boil water around the cable. Sell! To his daily 'God Save the Queen' he'll add 'and that man Drew'!"

Dick enacted a Comanche yell in pantomime.

"We could call it the *Post-Messenger*," he said.

"Or make them our morning and evening editions."

"No other plant in the city will equal it!"

"We'll make it the livest newspaper concern up the state."

"When the cablegram comes, I move we celebrate," Dick suggested. "New York is just about big enough for the occasion."

"When the cablegram comes, I shall be in Albany. I'm off to see poor Spedding at once."

Dick's face fell.

"I should think you would want to relax after this," he said ruefully.

"Relax! I relaxed on shipboard. Too much, in fact. Indeed, I can see now that I was much out of form on the voyage. But this thing has put life in my veins. I feel fighting fit."

CHAPTER IX

At sundown he sat in Spedding's study window looking over the conjoined parks of Capitol Hill. The foliage whispered under a breeze from the Catskills, and the trumpets of a honeysuckle beneath the sill blew intermittent little gusts of fragrance into the room. There was a sociable chatter of squirrels and robins going on in the twilight under the elms, while in a lighter spot beyond the greensward a row of fluted pillars glowed like ivory. Yet farther rose the granite and sandstone masses of a clock-tower steeped in the ruddy wine of a single shaft of fading light whose radiance was the brighter for a contrasting purple bar athwart leafage, pavement, and turf, which marked the loom of the unseen capitol.

"It's as tranquil as some village common in New England," said the old man, inclining his white head toward the prospect. "It amuses my second childhood to fancy it such at times. Just one thing mars the illusion: the shadow of the huge pile around the corner that Freeman called the Duke of Albany's château."

"Your château."

"Pish," rebuked the leader. Nevertheless the oblique recognition of his supremacy pleased him, and after a little moment he commented softly, "Dukedom and château — shadows both!"

"Yet you might have held office," Drew reminded. "Any you chose."

"I dare say. Any save one."

"The presidency?"

"Aye. A boss may not tenant the White House, make as many Presidents as he will. Some hovering ægis forbids."

"There was Van Buren."

"They called their bosses dictators in his day," Spedding chuckled. "A sounding title."

"And you're a triumvir."

"In the same breath with Wentworth and Maddox. By myself I'm plain Boss Spedding. That's the killing epithet."

"So it's a question of terms?" Drew said, amused. He had never seen him in quite this mood. "I detest that word 'boss,' but I never thought it ill-omened."

"Don't refine upon the idea," laughed Spedding, "or you'll turn it to nonsense like a dissected proverb. The grain of truth in it is that in the long run, the more skilful the politician,

the less his chance. Samuel Adams was the politician par excellence of the Revolution. You might almost say the movement was of his cradling. Yet he failed even of an election to Congress when it came to launching the ship of state."

"Perhaps it was because he was called Sam," Drew suggested lightly. "Nicknames seem a handicap in the presidential race. Yet Sam Adams, politician, must have had compensations of which, say, John Adams, statesman, never dreamed."

"Bless you, yes. Why, even that fearsome monster the boss has his compensations."

"Perhaps it's as well. He seems rather necessary nowadays."

"Say in any day, for you are dealing with a manifestation of human nature which changes its fashions but not its skin. The political engine minus its engineer is junk," he added energetically. "Of course there are engineers and engineers. Some of them deserve well of their country; some ought to get the sack. Van Buren, whom you instance, was a pretty good citizen if his famous Albany Regency did foreshadow the Boss System. The machine which his opponents founded in self-defence was far less

squeamish. Yet nobody now questions the ultimate patriotism of either. Hamilton, Van Buren, Seward, — those names and a host of others, New Yorkers all, Americans every inch, stand for statesmanship. Who remembers that they had to dicker and buttonhole in the Tontine Coffee House or the Eagle Tavern to shape the larger ends which are their true memorial! So bossism — which is the creature of its environment as were its forerunners — will drop into perspective and history assay its output impartially."

Electrics sputtered into trying brilliance near and far among the dusky elms, while indoors a servant entered and lit a shaded reading lamp. Spedding pushed back from the window, forestalling a movement of Drew's to aid.

"What are you going to do?" he inquired briskly.

"Do?"

"With your life, I mean. You can't go back to the old rut if you would. You have reached a turning-point — the summit of Dante's 'arch of life.' What are your plans?"

"Your view there reminded me of one just now. I mean to give my town a park."

"You have prospered! Tell me about it."

"Europe planted the idea."

"And your railway stock watered it?" flashed the old man. "Stick to your botanic metaphor, and you'll have your enemies saying as much."

"The street railway fertilized it at least. My real estate ventures have all panned out so famously that it's only fair to share my good luck with the public. The city lacks adequate parks, and I intend by and by to deed it my boyhood playground, — the ravine containing my father's mill. There are a hundred odd acres of it, — meadow, copse, stream; the raw material of a public breathing-spot a landscape gardener would almost go without his fee to reshape. It would need few changes. I'd put a road where the disused millrace lies, for the race leads through the heart of the glen. Oak, dogwood, sumach, wild grape, start everywhere from the rocks and interlock above the pools, and in a place I know behind the mill the cowslips grow as thick as buttercups. Then there's a spot where my mother always found the first trailing arbutus. The mill would remain. I'd stipulate that. The children could play there. It's a quiet place, moss-grown toward the water, ivy-covered toward the woods. The dam broke in a freshet years ago, and the wheel is green with moss too."

"Picturesque."

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"Yes. But I never saw it in that light till I went abroad. It was simply a thing I loved. But one day on the Continent I ran across a ruined mill in a park. It was not like my mill. It wasn't a part of its surroundings. It did not look as if it had grown there with the rocks. It had a transplanted air, and what little nature there was about had been made over — you know how?"

"I know," Spedding nodded. "Smoothed, ironed, barbered."

"But it gave me my idea. I saw that my mill was beautiful, picturesque. Had I a family I dare say I should have been fired with the ambition to build a house out there, but I'm not home-building and the city will be the gainer."

"You've never thought of marrying?"

Drew hesitated.

"None of my damned business, of course," whipped in the old man. "I am always tramping right over keep-off-the-grass signs with people I like. After the park, what?"

"Work never fails to turn up."

"Yes, work of a sort — day-to-day drudgeries or pleasures. But I'm driving at something bigger. I want your keynote, your darling ambition — in short, your scheme of life. You will give your park to the city which has enriched

you. Good! You will call Redfern's Federated Press bluff. Good! You'll go on picking up street railways here and there probably, since you have found they pay, and because you're thick with a syndicate which will make it worth your while to stay by them. Good! But after that what? Are you content to remain merely a money-spinner, a professional rich man? I'm willing to grant that the science of wealth is a learned profession if you like. I'll grant that directly or indirectly, in one way or another, good may spring from its pursuit. I'll grant the mental stimulus: that it requires keen brains, hair-trigger minds, great intellects, if you please, to manipulate the stock market, build railroads, coerce tariffs, juggle food-stuffs, pyramid millions on millions. I grant the spur, the seduction, the bigness even, of the game. But is it enough? Is it the measure of the aspiration of a man like you?"

Drew smiled into Spedding's intense old eyes.

"You're getting round to politics again," he accused.

"Yes," Spedding admitted, "yes, back to the game of games."

"You want me to turn politician?"

"Not turn! You are one, a politician born.

I would persuade you to swim with the current of your manifest destiny. You have had to do with politics all your adult life. You have used politics as a lever in your business advancement —for the benefit of the few. I want you to use politics now to serve the many, your party, the state."

"A railroad man isn't a popular vote-getter if it's office-holding you mean. Besides I've had my thirst slaked. The sensations of a mayor and a governor differ only in degree."

"I don't mean office-holding, man. I've seen all that at too close range to suggest it to you. No. I don't want you to run for office. I want you to help me now — I want you to fill my place by and by."

The younger man made a sign of protest.

"Don't speak of successors —"

"Look!"

Drew turned. Throughout their talk Spedding had shunned reference to his physical condition. He had brushed aside inquiry at the outset, and the vivacity of his subsequent chat thrust the recollection of it from his caller's mind. Now, with a gesture of ineffable pathos, the old man recalled his plight.

"Look!" he said. With his sound arm he

raised its useless fellow, held it so suspended an instant, then let it fall, adding, "It is time for plain speech."

Drew was silenced.

"I have cast about among you younger men for a year or more," Spedding went on. "I have weighed many who stand closer to me than you have stood, but it is always to you that I return. This street-railway episode just closed satisfies me that my intuition is correct. What you have done locally for the sake of a corporation, you can do elsewhere on a larger scale for your party. You have the instinct of practical leadership. You can handle men, singly or in the mass. You get things done."

He was silent a moment, with the soft lamplight falling on his venerable head. After all, Drew reflected, the room rather than the man signified what he was. Spedding himself might have passed for a poet or a philanthropist, certainly a scholar, but this chamber, mirroring his mind, was fragrant with historic associations: its aroma blent of pipe-smoke and old books, its rare manuscripts, its portraits of the commonwealth's greater sons — the living, the dead, his teachers, pupils, friends; its mantelpiece from the demolished capitol preceding the "château," its desk

once used by a governor he had made President, its very outlook upon the summit where the state's energies focussed, all bespoke Spedding and evoked a past of singular richness of which he might boast that he had been no trivial part.

But Spedding was no braggart.

"I should be a silly old man to babble of handing down this intangible dukedom, as you call it," he continued, looking up. "It belongs to the fittest. It is because I think you the fittest of those who shall come after that I am talking to you as I have talked to no man in my life. You recognize, as does every thinking man, that whatever the dominant party in the state, it devolves upon a little group to guide, and that of that group one man is nearly always salient. Hamilton was the master spirit in the Federalist group, Van Buren in the Albany Regency, Weed among the early Republicans, Tilden among the Democrats, so down the changing years. Call the group Regency — Firm — Big Four — yes, Triumvirate, — what you will, one brain virtually controls. The drift of politics is toward one-man power. Hence the Boss. With us I admit that on the surface it often looks like dual rule. There have always been two New Yorks, urban and rural, now united, now at war;

it is a condition as old as the civilized community, and if some anthropologist told me that the Indians had the same circus before us, I wouldn't doubt it one whit. But whether he come from the North Woods or below the Bronx, provided only his finger knows the pulse of the state at large, the Man will prevail. His is the dukedom."

Drew was deeply stirred. The strange interview had not quickened his ambition particularly, but it had begotten a lively desire to be of present service to Spedding, let the future bring or withhold what it might.

"What do you want me to do?" he asked.

"I want you to be my new arm," Spedding answered, touching his inert member. "And my new arm is just now most needed in the chairmanship of the executive committee."

"There are to be changes, then?"

"Changes and changes," rejoined Spedding, his shrewd eyes twinkling through the lamplight. "'Hail to thee, thane of Glamis! Hail to thee, thane of Cawdor!'"

Drew was at no loss to penetrate the old man's meaning. By unwritten law the chairman of the executive committee of the state committee was heir apparent to the chairmanship of the larger body.

"I want you in the line of succession," Spedding went on. "Scovill's health is in a worse way than people realize, and the last session here told on him particularly. But he has sand, — Scovill has, — and he's promised to stick it out till the campaign is over, provided we infuse more young blood into the organization and take over a part of his load."

"Young blood would help the whole party, I think," Drew remarked. "We don't get hold of the twenty-one-year-olds as we used."

"That's the idea," applauded Spedding. "That's what I want you for. I want you to capture the army of new voters in this state, the army half the size of Sherman's which yearly arrives at voting age. I'm not inviting you to a summer snap. There'll be times you'll wish you were twins. The job will mean long days at state headquarters when the asphalt of Madison Square will fry and fricassee with the mercury at par; and perhaps still longer nights when you'll sigh to swap clothes with Diana on the tower. It will mean hard work, but you're not afraid of work; and all the while you will be soaking in the thing you need most, — familiarity, intimate familiarity with the whole state, county by county, township by township. You know the party's

general staff, the higher officers, well enough. You need only a little better acquaintance with the subalterns and the rank and file. Then let Scovill step down when he will."

"But if by then I've had enough?"

"No danger. Come! Give me your word."

"I'll sleep on it."

At breakfast he promised.

"But give me an interval to myself first," he conditioned. "I've something of a household to set in order."

"You'll be foot-loose till the state committee meets — say the middle of August. If it weren't an off year, we couldn't postpone things so long."

"I'll be ready. From the committee meeting till election the party shall stand first."

"That's the talk," Spedding approved.

The maid at this juncture laid a cablegram beside Drew's plate. Excusing himself, he tore it open, flushing a little as he read.

"Osborn accepts," he announced quietly.

Spedding hailed the tidings as a dove of peace.

"You can afford to be magnanimous," he said jubilantly. "A month hence you and Redfern will be discussing local issues in a cosey corner."

Drew's square jaw stiffened.

"On his motion, understand."

"Assuredly," smiled Spedding. "As soon as he gets wind of your coming promotion, he'll exude harmony at every pore. I've been a life-long believer in compromise, or at least since I cut my political eye-teeth back in the prehistoric times of the Barnburners and the Hunkers. My teething-ring was Van Rensselaer Wood. You've doubtless heard many a yarn about Wood? He was Dutch on the distaff side and as obstinate as old Petrus Stuyvesant himself. Well, as long as Van and I fought one another, the common enemy got the ballots. Then we made up. When he died, ten years ago, he was on the Court of Appeals bench; and I've done so-so myself. Yes; I believe in compromise. It's the cement of majorities. Redfern will be a convert presently. The ease with which you'll get together will amuse you."

CHAPTER X

THE process rather more than amused Drew. It enlarged his knowledge of human nature. Redfern's paper mirrored his chameleon moods. Dumb under the blow of the *Post-Messenger* checkmate, speech of a halting perfunctory sort returned to the *Mail* as the newspaper ado, coupling Drew's name with the chairmanship, ran its checkered course of yea and nay before receiving its authoritative mint-stamp from Spedding; while Drew's proposed gift to the city undammed a rhetoric flood which dexterously ignored the sources of his largess. By such peace offerings Redfern paved the way to an hour when he met his enemy face to face in the Valley Club, and, as oblivious of yesterday's feud as if it concerned dead Thebes or Nineveh, proceeded to laud the public spirit of his "esteemed contemporary."

"I never saw a man eat dirt with such relish," observed Dick, queasily. "Could you bolt such a pill, Philip, to be governor?"

"Not to be czar of the earth. It dashes my faith in the dignity of man. I hate a liar, but when he's a hypocrite too — faugh!"

"I suppose, all the same, that the prospective chairman will from now on be obliged to give the mendacious yet useful spellbinder the glad hand?"

"Oh, yes," assented Drew, gloomily.

"For our great and good friend the mayor must be renominated, and McQuade, who has set his foolish heart on a seat in the Assembly, must be gratified!"

"Not to mention a baker's dozen other reasons besides the chief wherefore."

"That the man who bosses a state campaign should show a clean bill of health in his own county?"

"Just so."

"The politician's life is not a happy one, happy one," Dick sang.

"Shut up!" said his uncle. "You give me the blues."

The incident put him out of conceit with his task. He wondered if many such stepping-stones would dot the causeway of political expediency. With Spedding he believed compromise an efficacious oil in forwarding human

affairs, but he held that as there was a time to compromise, there was also a time to crush; and foremost among the noxious things which should be harshly dealt with, he was accustomed to rank the weakling who broke his word. The man himself was no pattern of sanctity, but in his rough-hewn virile creed Redfern's offences were labelled unclean. Yet, detest each other as they cordially did, the two were in frequent consultation well within the month Spedding named. Thus, too, it fell out that they travelled to New York in the same sleeper for the general gathering of politicians attracted by the state committee meeting, and that the convention a month later often beheld them sitting side by side.

From the outset of his service at the busy treadmill in Madison Square, Drew perceived that the present state chairman had meant what he said in demanding a lightening of his responsible burden. He was an anæmic person whom the city noises fretted to distraction, and upon the morning of Drew's arrival he was testily routing even the members of his own clerical force beyond ear-shot. As the days went by, detail after detail of this semi-invalid's province was shifted upon the newcomer whom nothing fretted, nothing tired. Did the county chairman of Seneca have

a grievance? See Drew. Did the factions in Genesee require a tactful arbiter? See Drew. Did the anti-machine element in Erie threaten trouble? See Drew. And meanwhile Drew somehow saw to the campaign at large for whose safe-conduct he more than any man would be held accountable. Off year though it was, the state senators now chosen would have a voice in deciding whether Katherine's father should succeed himself at Washington.

Spedding's interest was keen, his eye everywhere. Yet, as in the past, his supervision was unobtrusive, often unguessed, a leadership of tactful suggestion. In other years he had spent much of the summer following the campaign's opening at a shore resort easily accessible from New York. Now, however, he was restricted to the midsummer dulness of Albany and a Catskill hotel where Drew paid him frequent Sunday visits.

"I am the slave of rules," he complained whimsically. "I run upon inflexible schedule time. My hours of work, what I shall eat, my cigars, my walks, my naps, almost the thoughts I think, are by grace of his High Mightiness the Doctor. In fact, Philip," — his eye lit drolly, — "I'm actually being bossed."

During this time Drew saw not a little of the man Maddox whom the party up state looked upon with mingled fear and admiration. He was a still man, ruggedly blocked out, with inscrutable, sad eyes and a deep, gentle voice. By common report his youth had been violent. Maddox let common report blow as it listed. Whatever his beginnings, the speaking fact now obtained that he wore the surface veneer of a gentleman. Indeed, he was even reputed to patronize grand opera. As the resident triumvir he was much at headquarters, but outside his own field he gave no unsolicited advice. He was a close listener, nevertheless, as he sat wreathing his head in the smoke of a never absent cigar, and Drew discerned that he personally was being weighed and assayed, though by what standards he could not guess.

Whatever Maddox's reticence regarding the campaign in general, he spared no pains to bring out the full party vote within his own domain. It was his hobby, his fetich, the token of his fitness to rule his half-feudal clan. As one means toward this end, at the close of the canvass he planned a vast mass-meeting whose list of speakers he set in order with Drew's aid.

"Redfern will be free for that date, I see,"

he remarked, scanning a memorandum of the leading campaigners' engagements. "We'll wire him at once. Then there's Wentworth to be coaxed."

"He grows more and more averse to the stump," Drew answered. "I sounded him at the convention. National questions absorb him."

Maddox freed a gust of smoke and an aphorism. "The man with his head in the clouds can't always have asphalt under foot," he averred. "I fail to see anybody whose stake is bigger than Wentworth's this fall. I'll talk to him myself."

What passed between the triumvirs Drew could only conjecture, but the upshot of Maddox's persuasions was the blazoning of Wentworth's conjuring name upon the posters.

Drew had not thought to go. He avoided rallies in general, and saw no reason why he should make an exception of Maddox's, until at the eleventh hour he overheard that special balcony seats had been set aside for a party of ladies which would include the daughter of Senator Wentworth. He had not met Katherine since their memorable week as fellow-voyagers. At first it had seemed to him pure chance, and he had trifled with the notion of a second invitation to "The Beeches" with Dick. Time slew that delusion.

Neither was Harris bidden by himself, an omission which apparently cost him no pangs. That Dick was welding the fragments of his broken heart in the flame of another attachment had crossed even the mind of his uncle whose ideas of constancy were perhaps quixotic. Sympathetic references to social settlement work recurred frequently in the editorial columns of the *Post-Messenger*. But Drew got small comfort from the discovery that he need no longer scruple over Dick's happiness. Had not Katherine herself raised the great barrier? She had understood that night. She had avoided him afterward. For months he had been telling himself that he must lay this grim lesson resolutely to heart.

Yet to-night the mere knowledge of her nearness had stirred him poignantly. Throughout the dinner hour he played with the idea of seeing, perhaps speaking with her again, and later, without mustering, or attempting to muster, one of the rational reasons for action by which he aimed to rule his life, he betook himself to the huge riding-academy that Maddox had rented in the calm assurance that he could pack it to the doors.

It needed but a glance over the thousands who shuffled their chilled feet in the tanbark and watched the antics of a jumping-jack bandmaster

making sure his next summer's tenure in the city parks, to perceive that the leader had not reckoned without his host. It was a big meeting with big possibilities, and the press tables had no vacant seats. The governor of the state spoke first and ill. He was an official whom Spedding had privately hit off as "healthy, wealthy, and not too distressingly wise, in a word, safe." This was prior to inauguration. Spedding would now qualify the characterization, and rumor was busy with the name of the governor's probable successor, who nobody made the mistake of thinking would be the governor himself. Maddox had sandwiched him into his programme as a glittering bit of padding, and as such the crowd accepted him, listening with patience, sighing its relief at his sitting down, and perfunctorily applauding his office. A moment later it roared a tremendous welcome at Wentworth whose quaint figure, rarely seen outside the Senate Chamber at Washington, now towered erect as a pine tree beside the chairman's flag-draped desk.

It was a spontaneous tribute from the average man to brains, preëminence; to Wentworth as one of the noble line of constitutional interpreters; to Wentworth as a link binding the present with an already shadowy past. Drew bent forward to

watch. It was something out of the ordinary. He rejoiced that Katherine was there to see her father's triumph. He tried vainly to identify her.

The old man was touched by his welcome, and acknowledged it happily. The vast audience settled itself to listen and fairly radiated its content. A little pause ensued while Wentworth fumbled from pocket to pocket for a thin packet of manuscript which he finally ransacked from the lining of his silk hat. A woman's titter broke upon the hush with the abruptness of a shot, and set in motion a general rustle from rostrum to galleries. With dismay Drew perceived that Wentworth had let his great moment go by. A younger Wentworth would have cast manuscript to the winds at such a welcome; the Wentworth of three score and ten pottered with spectacles and paging and lights, till men forgot his career to wonder at the antiquity of his collar and cravat.

Thenceforward all was dismal. Coerced to an irksome task, the senator had drafted a labored speech, which apparently he had had the patience neither to assimilate nor even reread. However it might look in to-morrow's type, it was unspeakably tedious to hear, and with sinking heart Drew

beheld an audience, primed for hero-worship, yawn its justifiable boredom. He sat with bowed head, tortured afresh by each fresh mishap of manner or text, his every nerve imploring the misguided veteran to have done; yet when the end did mercifully come, the grudging applause stung him like sleet. In the deeps of his vicarious humiliation he caught nothing of the chairman's introduction of the next speaker save the words "the discourager of apathy"; and they conveyed no meaning till, in common with every person in that crowded building, he straightened in his chair at the trump of Redfern's mighty voice.

Redfern the Magnificent — the Firebrand — saw his chance and fastened upon it. He had no such welcome as Wentworth's, but with his grandiose figure and a voice which carried to the very newsboys in the street, he gained instantly the hearing which the senator had possessed but to fritter away, and he kept it to the end. Mortified by Wentworth's failure, hostile to the speaker by every instinct, Drew could not with candor deny that the man rose to the level of his opportunity. He anticipated the serio-comic claptrap which does duty with nine spellbinders out of ten; he listened to a bit of special pleading in behalf of a political party, whose match for cleverness he

could not recall. Humor, pathos, sarcasm, invective,— every stop of the inexplicable gift of oratory was made to contribute to the ordered march of Redfern's historic review, which in its final eulogy of the party's worthies, not omitting Wentworth himself, seemed fairly to master and transcend the man. It was an extraordinary achievement, Gallic perhaps in manner, if a single word will express it, Gallic certainly in its effect upon an audience by no means hidebound in partisanship, which it brought frantically cheering to its feet.

Drew left the building without attempting to see Katherine. He painted and shared her heart-sickness too vividly to face her then. A vague plan of calling at her hotel in the morning was frustrated when morning came by an incident which he knew must bruise the aching wound in her pride afresh. A newspaper, commonly held to reflect Maddox's personal views, drew an editorial moral from the night's happenings in their relation to the senatorship, which ended with the pointed inquiry, "Why not Redfern?"

Luckily it proved a short-lived sensation, provocative of bar-room and street-corner gossip mainly, and neglected altogether by the leading

newspapers. If, when the campaign closed with Drew's management approved by a lift in off-year returns, Redfern loomed a more considerable figure, Wentworth to all appearances was a popular idol still.

Drew welcomed the preëlection lull and plunged eagerly into the current of his personal affairs. He had by now struck a fast alliance with the sharp-witted syndicate of New Yorkers, and was a prime mover of a scheme to merge the entire "Valley" system with a network of railroad, gas, and electric power companies which should ramify a large section of the state. Its details appealed strongly to his intellect, mere money-spinning though Spedding might dub it. He was not so certain as Spedding that politics was the game of games; not so smitten with his few months near the throttle of the machine that he looked with zest to succeeding as state chairman.

Nor did Spedding's physical condition bespeak his help so eloquently. The regimen, plus Drew, had worked a seeming miracle. The body rallied under the exercise to which it had long been a stranger, the jaded brain drowsed and freshened in hours of unwonted rest. Indeed, the September convention had seen him merely a little grayer, a little thinner, but in all else apparently the

resourceful, brilliant leader of old. While it was transparent to Drew that for those brief Saratoga days Spedding had assumed a vigor he did not feel, even he had faith in the access of energy which the veteran took on in the bracing coolness of the autumn. With Spedding on the mend and the great merger absorbingly near success, Drew easily elbowed politics to a far corner of his mind. Coveting no office, amply clothed with power of another kind, by no means bankrupt of intellectual interests for his leisure hours, he lacked the shrewdly personal spur of one sort or another — a means of livelihood, a wife's ambition, what not — which yokes the politician to his often distasteful task. This, then, was his frame of mind when he received an enigmatic call to Washington. Wentworth wrote that he had a personal matter to broach, and would Drew do him the honor to become his guest?

It was yet some hours before dinner for which he had specified that they might count on him, when Drew arrived in Washington, and despatching his bag to the "Arlington," where Wentworth now made his home, he mingled with the queer composite of national life which ebbs and flows through Pennsylvania Avenue from White House to Capitol. The Senate flag drooped lazily at its

staff, and if Wentworth were disengaged, their main business might be disposed of at once.

But in the public reception room an official told him that the senator was greatly occupied.

"Engaged?" laughed the man. "I should think so. You've only just missed seeing him with all his guns in action. In fact, he's firing occasionally still."

Drew took the elevator to the gallery and possessed himself of a just vacated seat behind the rail. He always found the simple chamber which houses the United States Senate impressive and took a certain pleasure in surrendering himself to its atmosphere. Howsoever they had come by their credentials, these keen lawyerlike men here gathered were peculiarly a picked body, the survival of the fittest in the working out of a law of natural selection, the embodied dignity of over two score sovereign states. Even as set forth in the irreverent vernacular of a compatriot at elbow, the beadroll of the commonwealths was a sonorous thing.

"That's Vermont's senior senator talking to the new man from Colorado," he was whispering hoarsely to a companion whose head bent with his own over a diagram of the floor. "Those are Massachusetts people just behind on the Repub-

lican side. The old Bay State always sends brains. Iowa? Yes, that chap's from Iowa. Long service? Yes, he'll hold the job till he dies, I guess. What say? Which? With white whiskers? Oh, he's from Nevada. Yes, he does look like Father Time. All he needs is the hour-glass and scythe. He's buttonholing a Kentuckian. Old Confederate soldier, that man. Fought all through the muss. Next desk over sits one of California's mining kings. On that second sofa just below you'll see the junior cowboy from Texas swapping yarns with Virginia and Maine. Notice that gray-headed old Roman down there in the king row? No, not the man with the bandanna. Two seats over, I mean. Yes, the one with the Henry Clay necktie. Well, that's Wentworth of New York! He took a fall out of one of the South Carolina people a little while ago. Gee, what a memory he's got! Regular walking edition of the Congressional Record. He's been in politics on and off since the Mexican War, they say. S-sh! He's going to speak."

With the same thrill he had experienced when Wentworth came before Maddox's unlucky meeting, Drew saw him claim and obtain the Vice President's recognition of "the Senator from New York"; but now there followed no

bitter moment of disappointment. An echo merely of the earlier battle, he could yet deduce the quality of the whole. It was obviously one of the half sectional clashes over the currency which have fretted the temper of the Congresses of three decades, and the aggressor was a Southerner, rash, cocksure, fatally fluent. His speech was intemperate, "crime," "tyranny," "perfidy," and the like being his catch-words; his skin flamed with his vehemence; he sank in his seat with clothing awry.

"During the year which the Senator from South Carolina is pleased to term a saturnalia of fiscal crime, I had the honor, sir, to be Secretary of the Treasury."

With this preface began the even flow of Wentworth's reply. From the vast storehouse of his memory he set in order the garbled and distorted facts, marshalling without a note the most intricate statistics of finance, all in a dispassionate composure worthy of the Muse of History herself. It was a trenchant rejoinder, convincing as sunlight, impersonal as an act of Nature. Voice, gesture, everything, accorded with the Senate's best traditions.

Drew revelled in the subdued approval of the galleries and the significant smiles of Wentworth's

fellows. The veteran was fit for hero-worship after all. Here was the answer to Maddox's "Why not Redfern?" Here, as a parliamentarian, should Wentworth be judged! Here where among eminence he shone preëminent!

CHAPTER XI

DESCENDING to the entrance of the lobby, Drew sent in his card and was ushered into the Marble Room to await Wentworth's coming. It was growing dark and the famous chamber was flooded with artificial light which glistened in a thousand refractions from pillar and mirror and panelled wall. Sofas, corners, window-nooks, held the inevitable sprinkling of the anxious — the soldier's widow, the office-hunter, the man with a claim; but these potentialities of misery through hope deferred, tragically characteristic as they were, just now failed to strike the dominant note. After its sedate fashion the room was undeniably gay, and Drew promptly traced its source to a senator famous as a raconteur, now scintillating in the midst of a group of pretty girls piloted over from the House by a young millionnaire clubman who had run for Congress as a species of untried lark.

"Now if ladies were eligible," the wit was proclaiming, "that suggestion about senatorial togas —"

"For fifteen years I have struggled, mortgaging the little farm my husband left —"

Fragments of chaff and heartbreak, grotesquely intermingled, reached Drew from either side of the white column where he had taken his stand. Then, at a murmured word from the clubman, the debonair bevy was stirred by a flutter of curiosity, and half a dozen pairs of feminine eyes forsook the jester to focus at the room's far end. Equipped for outdoors in one of the obsolete garments which kept Talma's name in current speech long after men forgot his acting, Wentworth hesitated at the entrance in near-sighted helplessness till Drew went to his rescue.

"This is a friendly service," he greeted the younger man, shaking hands. "I could not well leave Washington just now, and Spedding, poor fellow, can't post here to me as once. You, sir, are the fortunate via media."

Drew bowed ceremoniously. Like most persons he found the quaint formality of Wentworth's manner slightly contagious.

"I am doubly honored, senator," said he.

"What say you to a half-hour walk at an old man's pace? I don't ride home unless I must."

Drew fell in with the suggestion and they passed out by way of the public corridors and

the rotunda to an upper terrace where by a common impulse they paused. The sky was painted with an afterglow which gradated from a fiery crimson, edging the Virginia hills, through vast waves of orange and purple to a zenith of soft lilac and sapphire. The nearer atmosphere seemed filled with floating particles of gold; the shaft of the Obelisk, the city's roofs and spires, the chance greenness of ivy and laurel, the pavement under foot, were each and all bathed and sublimated in the golden shower for which the senator fetched from his beloved classics its easy parallel.

"But to our affair," Wentworth said, rousing as they struck beneath the leprous buttonwoods which arched the walk to the bustling avenue beyond. "Your loyalty was long ago approved. This journey, snatched from your busy life, strengthens the covenant."

"Command me."

"In all frankness I shall. I want a plain answer to a plain question. Tell me without reservation, should I retire?"

"Retire!"

"Should I make way for a younger man? I entreat your disinterested judgment. I cannot trust my own in this. I am sensible that in

some ways I grow old-fashioned, perhaps old-fogyish. The press, my fellow-senators, my devoted daughter, all in one way or another bring it home to me. Then, at that meeting in New York, I saw —"

"You saw a demagogue strum his pinchbeck instrument," Drew interposed. "That's not your forte, thank heaven!"

The slow flush of old age glowed in Wentworth's cheek.

"You're very good," he acknowledged; "very loyal."

"I am frank."

"But are you?" Wentworth persisted wistfully. "Is it my forte that people want nowadays? I am indeed out of step with many present tendencies, a conservative among radicals. Moral and material values alike seem to have shifted; the nation's business has grown more and more complex. We old men are not adaptable — Spedding is an exception; we nod, we drowse —"

Drew broke into a laugh.

"I saw you drowse in the Senate this afternoon."

Wentworth beamed his gratitude.

"You're very loyal," he repeated.

At this stage a familiar hail, which Drew identified as Rear Admiral Austin's, curtailed Wentworth's confidences.

"I've tried to overhaul you, John, ever since you doubled the Peace Monument," he addressed his brother-in-law, puffing from the chase. "How are you, Mr. Drew? You've gone actively into history making, I see, since we crossed from Southampton. Now when you make congressmen, why don't you inoculate them against the malignant plague of swelled head? I've been talking plain United States to a committee on naval affairs this afternoon, and of all the short-sighted barnacles —"

They fell into step together and the talk, ignited by a chance question of Drew's, became a spontaneous cross-fire of anecdote and reminiscence between the kinsmen. It was the best of talk, ranging the Washington of four decades, and the listener saw it end at the entrance of the "Arlington" with keen regret.

"Jove! how I've cackled," Austin broke off. "Here I am three squares past my turn. Good night, John, you garrulous ancient. Drew, I want you to meet some fellows at the Army and Navy Club if you sleep another night in Washington. So long."

Wentworth paused to watch the admiral swing down the street.

"It's absurd to shelve a man like Austin," he said. "Why, he'll never grow old!" Turning to Drew, he apologized that he possessed no roof of his own for his guests' entertainment. "I sold my K Street house at Mrs. Wentworth's death," he explained. "We found it lonely, my little girl and I. But now her aunt says a hotel is no place for Katherine. I dare say it's true. She shall have a house of her own another season —if I return."

"Still 'if'?" Drew caught him up. "But we'll go into that again later."

"Yes, later," agreed the senator. "You will want to dress for dinner now. Katherine has a friend stopping with her, by the way, — a Miss Reeves of New York."

"Miss Harriet Reeves?"

"You know her then?" Wentworth commented absently.

Drew said gravely that he did. Truly Wentworth was no politician!

As Drew joined them the two girls stood with arms intertwined, each of her type beautiful. Drew really saw but one of them. It was as a foil merely that he apprehended Harriet Reeves,

a comely maid of honor to a regal Katherine whom he knew and yet knew not. The precocious Katherine of "The Beeches," the modish Katherine of the chance encounter in New York, the expanding Katherine of the liner, one and all figured in his recollections as something distinctively girlish. But here, with dark hair piled high, her white throat girt with pearls, her rounded form clothed in some creamy fabric which clung in soft folds as she moved, in full panoply of sex, was a ripened Katherine splendid beyond vain imagining.

There were other revelations.

"I really named the consul to Barcelona," he overheard her say to Wentworth as they entered the dining room. "If I hadn't mentioned to the President that his wife's favorite novelist wanted just such a chance, the place would have gone to a nobody from Nebraska."

If they were foils in externals, so were Katherine and Harriet sufficiently unlike in mind to give their friendship savor, and the drolleries which between them they now struck from the day's news, the last book, the theatre, or a bit of the iconoclastic gossip of those in high places that Washington loves, ended by putting Drew upon his mettle and in luring Wentworth from

his formality. Drew marvelled to see the whole man freshened, rejuvenated, brought down to date; to hear him even turn a phrase of current slang. Then, with a flash of divination, he read in this simple magic Katherine's studied purpose. She would before him prove her father no dotard.

As they left the table they were momentarily thrown together.

"You are changed," he said; "disconcertingly changed."

"And you also."

"I?"

"Indeed you. If not disconcertingly," — she dramatized his inflection smilingly, — "at all events visibly."

"Older, you mean? I dare say it's time for crow's-feet."

"Not that." Her gray eyes ridiculed the notion. "It's a new expression in your face — a consciousness of power."

From an older woman it might have fallen unremarked. But from her! Did she seize by intuition what others mined in slow experience? How many Katherines were there to know? Presently he saw her the vivacious centre of a circle overwhelmingly masculine and in most part white-polled. Many of these men obviously

were old friends of her father's to whom she was "Katherine" and "Katrina," but as plainly they accepted her upon her own merits. She was a definite personality with a definite force. Drew flattered himself that he had found her keynote. She had spoken of power and its signs as a thing known.

"Two senators, a member of the cabinet, the Speaker — who are her other satellites?" he asked Harriet, with whom the regroupings over coffee and cigars had left him in a quiet corner of the palm room.

"An English M.P. discovering America, a foreign correspondent, two mere men, and some envious women," she inventoried. "Katherine usually turns this into a Court of Lions."

The music, the exotic plants, the tinted lights, the well-groomed prosperity of it all, lent the court figure a scenic aptness, while just then, answering some challenge apparently, Katherine fashioned a boutonnière from a handful of violets which she chose from a larger bunch in her corsage, and with a royal graciousness bedecked the broad-chested Speaker's lapel.

"She finds lion-taming exhilarating," Drew laughed. "Watch her color come and go."

Harriet's loyalty was instantly up in arms.

"She's just as charming to nobodies."

"Oh, but she's human, remember," Drew teased.

"All the same it's true. At school I used to fancy that even the Sisters had their little jealousies because of it. She's everybody's Katherine."

The phrase jarred upon him.

"She shouldn't be everybody's," he declared with uncalled-for emphasis.

"Somebody's?"

Harriet Reeves, studying Drew's profile, smiled demurely, was caught at it, and flushed deliciously.

Drew asked himself what the minx meant by that.

"The fact is," he said, "her aunt is right. This isn't a wholesome atmosphere."

The group about Katherine scattered as its magnet issued. Wentworth fell into a discussion with the Englishman. The girl herself came directly to Drew's corner.

"Have you sent the celebrities about their business, Lady Blessington?" he asked.

"It looks cosier here."

Drew chose a place for her chair shut off by furniture and palms.

"A barricade against another mob," he explained.

With a murmured excuse Harriet presently left them to themselves. Katherine met Drew's eyes.

"I wanted to talk to you," she stated frankly, with one of her lovely color changes. "In fact I'm responsible for your being here to-night."

For an instant the whole room — palms, lights, orchestra, people, the woman he loved — seemed to the man to pirouette in a giddy dance. Katherine had prompted Wentworth's summons! She had called him back!

CHAPTER XII

He pulled himself together at the sound of her voice.

"It is a great presumption," she was saying, "but I am horribly anxious about father. I need help — the help of a friend."

"You did right to call upon me. I am — a friend."

"You are indeed, and, better still, a clear-sighted friend. Ah, you are clear-sighted! I saw that in my girl's foolishness when you first came to us at 'The Beeches.' It grew upon me as I followed what you were doing in the world — whenever we met — in New York — on the steamer."

Drew winced. He clear-sighted! But a moment ago he had had the besotted stupidity to mistake a daughter's filial devotion for an encouragement of his suit.

"You overrate me," he said soberly. "I am incredibly dull over some of life's simplest things. But whatever I am not, at least believe me a sincere well-wisher of the senator's."

"Ah, you do care for him!" she exclaimed,

her face lighting. "I know that. That is why I dared presume. And he likes you. He spoke of it to-night. I don't know what you said to him, but you did him good. He spoke of retiring, of course?"

"Yes."

"And you laughed at him?"

"Yes."

"Because you honestly believe he should continue?"

"Yes."

She caught and pressed his hand impulsively.

"I knew I could trust you," she exulted. "I was sure, so sure."

Drew groped for his surety. Where was his trust in Philip Drew? He had thrilled to her touch like a callow boy. The old sweet bondage possessed him, its beguiling folly increased a thousand fold. How bleak, how unprofitable the life he led! How rich it might be! The adorable mirage of a home which Katherine should grace built itself anew. The ghosts of fancies he had slain trooped forth to plague him. He had bruised, not eradicated, his love. He could not root it out. He would not if he could.

But how far from his passion was Katherine's!

"Who could doubt your loyalty?" she was

saying. "You proved it in the national convention over seven years ago. If all New York's delegation had been as stanch, my father would have been nominated."

"And if nominated, elected," he added, compelling his mind to Wentworth's lost opportunity. "He should have been President."

"He should, he should," she repeated after him in low-voiced intensity. "The country wanted him; the convention ought to have wanted him, perhaps did; it could have been stampeded by the turning of a single one of those votes which father thought he could not in honor take. And to learn too late that he might have had them and welcome! Oh, I've gone over it again and again," she said, answering his wondering look. "I was a child then, alas! But I know the story as well as if I were a man who sat there in the crowded wigwam by your side. Father never speaks of it, but Mr. Spedding will sometimes talk. He owns that he held his hand when he should have struck. He should have acted on his own responsibility. It was a time to be bold as others were bold; yes — at times I almost think it — unscrupulous as others were unscrupulous."

"It was one of Spedding's rare mistakes."

"And his lifelong friend the sacrifice!"

"It was just that friendship which caused his fatal caution."

"I know, I know. To remember makes it more bitter still. Oh, that I could have been a woman then!" Her voice, vibrant with feeling, sank perilously near a sob. "I would have worked, worked, worked!"

She was splendid in her outbreak of passionate regret. If a father stirred such deeps, what a superb spendthrift of her heart's coin she could be as wife!

"Weak, womanish — say it!" she challenged, meeting his eyes presently with a teary little laugh. "It's the present, not the great lost chance, I should be thinking about; the senatorship, not the presidency."

"The senator must not dream of stepping down."

"It would kill him," she flamed. "It would kill him. Whatever he may say with his stout old lips, his heart would break if the state took him at his word. He shall not be coerced to this hateful thing."

"Who speaks of coercion?"

"No one speaks of it — yet. But it's thought! That editorial following father's unlucky address — Redfern —"

"Sounding brass," jeered Drew, with a heartening laugh. "Trust Spedding."

"I do. But he is a broken man."

"You should see how he has rallied."

"I have seen. But nevertheless you know — oh, he knows, brave heart! — that he stands in the shadow of Death."

"An attack may recur," Drew conceded. "Yet again it may be years hence."

"Or to-morrow!"

"Yes," he granted reluctantly.

"Even to-morrow! It has been a beautiful thing — their friendship: Mr. Spedding, the practical politician, with his sure grip on things as they are, upholding the hands of my father, an idealist. It is a rare thing, I suppose. Father has never had to think much about patronage, delegates, deals, and the petty, wearing details of public life. His mind has been free for large affairs. His friend was on guard. While Mr. Spedding lives — and reigns — this will continue. But by what a slender thread it hangs!"

"Practical appreciation of the senator isn't limited to Spedding."

"Oh, you are true blue; and others — less powerful."

The word "power," it struck him, ran through

all the fabric of her thought like a scarlet strand; like a recurring resonant note in the oriental theme the orchestra was now interpreting.

"A friend in power, that is the safeguard, — a powerful, unselfish friend. There is just one who could help," — her eyes half-shyly fathomed his, — "and of him I am not — quite — sure."

His nostrils were full of the perfume of her violets, which henceforth never dissociated itself from her personality. It was an inseparable property of the woman in the hour of her greatest fascination.

"Just one?" he repeated mechanically.

"You," — it came almost in a whisper, — "just you."

He fetched a long breath. The air had become singularly rarefied.

"And you're not sure?"

She answered with a question: —

"Do you mean to take the chairmanship of the state committee?"

It was a matter-of-fact little query, and the surcharged atmosphere cleared.

"So that's your doubt," he smiled. "Where did you get it? Some newspaper?"

She shook her head.

"Not from Spedding?"

"No."

"Nor any one with authority to speak?"

"With authority!" Her old buoyant laugh played with his bewilderment. "The best of authority — yourself!"

"Oh! intuition, then?"

"You speak as if it were voodooism or table-tipping."

"I'm not scoffing. I trust intuition myself — sometimes. Besides, you're right."

It was a barren victory.

"I've felt it ever since you came," Katherine said disconsolately.

"My changed face?" he laughed.

"Partly. I read it in your look and in little things you drop which reveal how full, how tremendously full, is your life. I know something of what Mr. Spedding hopes of you. He talks to me often with great frankness. But I see, as I think he does not, how great a sacrifice he asks. You don't care for politics for its own sake. You have power of another sort and his sort doesn't tempt."

"Puritan Salem would have tried you for a witch."

"There's no black art about it. My wits have been sharpened on my fears. The Redfern talk

frightened me into facing the future, a future without Mr. Spedding to make smooth the way. I began to see then that the future with him isn't so bright. Unless help comes things may be left undone which ought to be done promptly to insure father's reëlection. I know it's true that the state senators just elected are the right men. I suppose it's certain that nothing but a catastrophe can destroy our majority on joint ballot. But all the same it is common sense that the next Legislature should be made sure by systematic work, and that the work should be at once got under way."

"It is you who should be Spedding's helper."

"I'm afraid the time's not ripe," she smiled. "Then, you see, I am not one of the advanced women. I don't want to vote. My interest in politics is just personal, the interest of any woman who follows what concerns those dear to her. If my father were a clergyman, I dare say I should be absorbed in sewing guilds and parish gossip."

"And in love with the curate or some vestryman?"

"Does that follow? I am not in love with father's secretary or some politician."

Drew abandoned that line of inquiry, and at this juncture the senator detached himself from

the Member of Parliament, and in his serene, benignant way made toward them in a sort of royal progress, chatting with one and another who accosted him, and followed by half the eyes of the room. Katherine glowed and looked to Drew for sympathy.

"Oh, he is superb!" he said. "Nobody since Webster has had quite that physical impact upon people's imaginations. Does he see the matter of his reëlection in the same light that you do?"

"I've spoken of it. That is why he's staring so persistently at the bogy of old age which he really doesn't believe in at all. He is really young, not because like ourselves he is young in years, but because he *feels* young. If he retired, he would feel old — and die."

Young, like ourselves! That naïve coupling of their personalities turned the scale. It plucked out the barb implanted upon the liner. He had found his incentive, his compelling motive, his shrewdly personal spur.

"Let's try and keep him young," said the man. "Young — like ourselves."

Katherine caught her breath.

"You mean —" she faltered.

"I will take the chairmanship. I will be the senator's field-marshal."

She questioned him silently an instant, doubting her victory. Then her eyes dropped and he saw that her lashes were wet.

"I can't thank you now," she said chokingly. "I did not realize you cared so much."

"Care!"

She raised her eyes at his stormy response.

"But he is worthy of your devotion," she added with a proud lift of the head. "He is worthy."

This time Drew's glance fell.

With characteristic detachment Wentworth accepted the younger man's pledge of personal fealty as quite in the natural course of things for a forthcoming state chairman, and, without a word spoken, Drew and Katherine joined hands to abet the amiable egotist's delusion. By a token, however, when they parted, Katherine gave their new relation its recognition.

"The day you saved my life you called me 'Katherine,'" she said, apropos of his last "Miss Wentworth." "Why not now?"

"Good-by, then — Katherine," he stammered. "My name is Philip, you know."

She laughingly shook her head.

"That would be leze-majesty. So good-by — *Mr.* Philip Drew."

CHAPTER XIII

His way and Katherine's did not cross as spring slipped into summer, but their intimacy thrived. He could have constructed a fair outline of her life from the papers, for she had become a staple topic in Washington "notes," but Drew was not reduced to that extremity. Katherine wrote often and at length.

They were piquant letters, half girlish, half businesslike, blended of head and heart, truthful little mirrors of her various puzzling self. Shrewd inquiries about legislative candidates in remote rural districts would jostle the description of a ball gown or a clever saying from somebody's dinner. Through all ran an unaffected joy in living which brought the eager, human, lovable woman herself very close. As Drew read — perhaps in an Albany lobby, perhaps with the roar of New York just without — he would glimpse the turn of her graceful head, the adorable changing color, the interplay of laughter and seriousness in the gray eyes. The low voice itself came

sometimes; at times the perfume of violets; then, with redoubled energy, he would fall to work, and run a better race for sighting the ultimate goal.

Meanwhile history was made. The two great national conventions met and named their standard-bearers, and the forces everywhere mobilized for the presidential campaign. To Drew, however, now sentenced to hard labor at headquarters, national issues were at present of secondary interest beside the manœuvres of James Y. Redfern. He had first attracted Drew's thoughtful notice at the Chicago convention by his sedulous cultivation of Maddox. He had lunched with him, dined with him, even breakfasted; and he finally left for the East in the metropolitan leader's private car, acclaimed a royal good fellow by the triumvir's boon companions, the smoking-room confidant of Maddox himself.

Spedding squinted skyward when somebody gossiped of it and predicted the speedy launching of a boom.

"Famous weather for garden truck," he remarked. "I dare say we'll find surprises in our little plot back home. How weeds thrive when your back is turned!"

Drew was well accustomed to his parables.

"Maddox will back Redfern?" he said when they were alone.

"Maddox will use Redfern."

"Governorship or Senate?"

"Both maybe," returned the old man indifferently. "It will crop out at the state committee meeting."

So it happened. The midsummer meeting of the state committee, as always, forced the budding candidacies for every office within the gift of the coming convention whose date the committee set. The buzzing corridors, neighboring the hotel parlor where the committee deliberated, witnessed each hour the birth of some new boom. Redfern's bid for the governorship was now openly exploited by various newspapers throughout the state, but in this ambition to head the ticket he was by no means solitary. A round half-dozen gentlemen with varying degrees of modesty let it be understood that they were in a receptive mood. Each had his fluent mouthpiece; each was of sufficient weight to stir discussion; each, it may be added, was greeted with impartial cordiality by Spedding, who bade them fight it out among themselves till the best man won. Separately interviewed, the members of the Triumvirate were found as a unit non-

committal, and the word went out among the highways that the organization was grooming no favorites. Sceptical editorial writers called this "Boss Spedding's old dodge," but the hopeful six gathered delegates early and late.

The summer was hot beyond all records, and from the beginning Drew arranged to spend his nights at Spedding's old seaside haunt. The veteran planned a return himself, but his physician forbade, and the resort's political life, such as it was, centred about Drew himself. Even with Spedding absent, the great hotel housed enough politics to make most of Drew's evenings but added chapters to the story of the day. Still, the surf lulled him nightly to the full measure of sleep without which his best work was impossible, and he frequently got a tonic hour in mental undress from the sail down the harbor. Sometimes self-invited companions robbed him of this latter freshening, and at the close of a wilting afternoon, some three weeks before the state convention, he sat lazily watching river and pier, suffused with a great peace born of the belief that not one soul of all that queer excursion conglomerate hurrying aboard knew him. This vague thanksgiving scarcely attained the dignity of a definite thought before a familiar voice stayed the

unshipping of the gang-plank, and Redfern, blown yet consequential still, trotted into view.

Drew waited, certain of the man's errand. Indeed, with the Lafayette County primaries almost at hand, he marvelled that Redfern had not sought a meeting before.

"My dear Drew! How fortunate!"

New York's amazing sky-line had dropped far enough astern to soften and purple against a background of fleecy cloud before the expected greeting came.

Drew's "Ah!" was a work of art. It implied neither surprise, displeasure, welcome, anything. It was absolutely colorless, absolutely noncommittal.

Redfern chose to construe it as a note of welcome. When he aimed to conciliate, he oozed joviality, and Redfern in his rôle of hail-fellow Drew detested most. He knew his heartiness for an empty mannerism, a mask, a hack politician's chief stock in trade. He penetrated and resented its spurious quality now as the man drew up a camp-stool and, fanning himself with a Panama hat of cavalier smartness, fenced for a conversational opening by cursing the heat.

"It's especially trying to a man of my weight," he observed.

Drew eyed his moist Falstaffian bulk as he civilly admitted the handicap, and decided that "trying" literally expressed the situation. He returned to the shifting panorama of the upper bay. Redfern also swept the scene, questing a diplomatic approach to his business from the slopes of Staten Island to the flotsam astern. After a vain search of water, land, and sky he fell back upon the weather.

"You're quite willing to leave politics behind at headquarters after one of these broilers, I suppose?"

"Quite," agreed Drew, blithely meeting his lead. "I merely sit and admire the harbor tugs. They're worth study. Wasn't it Huxley who said that if he couldn't be a man, he'd rather be a tug? There's a poem in the tug if somebody would dig it out. Kipling could handle it. I wonder that Whitman did not try. He got all sorts of things from a ferry-boat."

Redfern rumbled some indistinct reply in his beard, and scrambled back to familiar ground.

"I guess only you people at headquarters know the drudgery that a campaign means," he observed feelingly. "The man outside thinks work begins with the stump speeches."

"Yes. And he holds back his check accord-

ingly. He can't understand how the pay-roll swells from the day we issue the call for a state convention. It costs to have your mail dumped upon you by the sack. It costs to retain John Doe to watch the enemy in one county, and to make it worth Richard Roe's while to keep his eyes open somewhere else."

"Not to mention the neat little packages of greenbacks to be dropped from Tonawanda to Montauk Point?" leered Redfern. "The dumb spellbinders, eh?"

Drew made no response. He had a fastidious reticence regarding the darker uses of money in practical politics. He appreciated as well as the next that under certain conditions certain things must be, but he did not like to bandy the failings of humanity in flippant speech.

As the talk grounded again Redfern's ruddiness deepened. Then he abruptly abandoned verbal jockeying, and set a straight course.

"I want to talk Saratoga to you," he announced.

Drew turned to face him. When he dealt with persons of uncertain veracity, he preferred to watch their eyes.

"At your service," he returned.

"You're more in the confidence of the leaders than I am," Redfern prefaced. "You probably

know their real opinion about the governorship. Spedding says that the field is open. He always says that. Maddox as usual chimes in that the convention's choice will suit him right down to the ground. Now if it is an open field, my chance is as good as the next man's. Maddox gives me free rein to do what I can in his territory and I'm doing pretty well. I've been tolerably successful up state too."

"Delegates talk."

Redfern paused and stroked the parting of his auburn beard with a characteristic movement of forefinger.

"I'll ask you a plain question," he resumed. "Are you personally pledged to anybody?"

Drew's face was serene.

"I'll give you a plain answer," he said. "No."

Redfern sociably edged up his camp-stool.

"That clears the ground. I feel free to attempt to induce you to join forces with me. As I see it, an alliance would be of mutual benefit."

Drew made a sign of assent. Spedding's "cement of majorities" was a repugnant substance to handle. He wondered whether the old leader and his quondam foe who died high in office had been temperamentally polar opposites.

Redfern went on.

"With you where you are," he said, "and another Two Rivers man in the governor's chair, I think we may take the benefit which would accrue to Lafayette County for granted."

"I think we may," rejoined Drew, dryly. "There's the trifling preliminary of the election, however."

"Quite so," the editor agreed. "Not to mention the Saratoga convention also. You are right to bring the matter back to actualities. Facts, if I may say so, are your forte. Assuming then that Two Rivers, Lafayette County, the entire Valley in fact, would profit by such a contingency, let us confront the fact that its achievement will necessitate the coöperation of all those who have the Valley's interests at heart."

Drew became restive under the roll of polysyllables. The man's errand was transparent. Why, after his spellbinder's habit, did he wheel and wheel?

"And you suggest?"

Redfern coughed.

"I rather hoped you would do that," he said with his oily smile.

"Very well," Drew said briskly. "I suggest that the Valley send a solid James Y. Redfern

delegation to Saratoga. That covers the ground, doesn't it?"

Taken aback by his easy victory in the face of obstacles he had deemed the thorniest, Redfern let himself relax with a long-drawn sigh of content.

"It leaves nothing to be desired," he beamed. "It sets my candidacy in a proper light before the state. It is, I may say, a most flattering endorsement. I realize that past — er — misunderstandings might have prejudiced — that McQuade — "

"Oh, McQuade will prove amenable. The delegation will go up to Saratoga with a single mind. Naturally I can't predict the course of my friends during the entire convention. Questions of the moment must be settled as they arise. But I assume that your chief concern is with the effect of a united delegation at the outset?"

"Exactly. The moral effect of a solid Valley delegation upon other delegates."

"And in case you should be disappointed in your showing in the early balloting?" He fingered the man's vanity for a definite stop. "An opportune withdrawal in convention sometimes makes a man's future."

The instrument responded instantly to his touch.

"Trust me," Redfern rejoined loftily. "Trust

me. I shall steer clear of pitfalls. If I am to head the ticket, the call must come with no uncertain sound."

"And if by the third or fourth ballot—"

"The first, my dear sir, will decide."

"Don't limit yourself too narrowly. I raise the point to obtain some definite word for my people's guidance. Suppose we say that, if after three ballots, the convention has made no choice—"

"Then let your delegates vote as they will," charged Redfern, in vainglorious haste.

His main point gained, the man's affability knew no bounds. Was not his friend Drew overworking himself? Could not they plan some recreation for the evening? A band concert, perhaps? Fireworks, summer opera? But Drew pleaded an engagement, and once ashore took the first available pretext to rid himself of Redfern's budding good-fellowship. At the nearest telegraph office he wired McQuade to meet him at headquarters in the morning.

Drew found the Irishman posted in a window with his eyes oscillating between the pictorial charm of the stream of shoppers without and the undoubted good looks of one of the feminine stenographers within.

"Such a bunch to pick from and but one allowed!" he sighed, following Drew into his private room. "That lad Solomon had th' right notion of th' gentlemanly thing."

Drew left his lieutenant to the morning papers while he winnowed his personal mail. McQuade, having assured himself that the "Giants" were still "playing ball," duly inspected yesterday's performances of the "ponies," skimmed the pugilistic gossip with his usual reflection that "old Jawn L." was after all in a class by himself, and leisurely turned to things political.

"Powers above!" he suddenly implored. "Will you listen t' this!"

Drew looked up with a glint of a smile.

"Go on."

His vigilant forefinger trailing the astounding item to its ultimate period, his voice pounding out the articles and particles with the same unction he bestowed upon nouns and verbs, McQuade read:—

"'Among those who know, the gubernatorial boom of the Hon. James Y. Redfern of Two Rivers is said no longer to require the swaddling of cotton-wool in which it was tenderly brought to this city last month at the meeting of the State Committee. Mr. Redfern is a popular

man on the stump, and his name has been mentioned frequently for the governorship in past years, though without attracting support sufficient to justify his friends in pressing his candidacy in convention. This floating Redfern sentiment is now crystallizing in the practical form of delegates, however, and the Lafayette County orator of the silver tongue seems likely to prove a noteworthy contestant in Boss Spedding's forthcoming free-for-all hippodrome at Saratoga. Mr. Redfern, who last evening joined the constellation of political stars which twinkle nightly at Manhattan Beach, modestly declined to discuss the matter beyond confirming the report that no past differences between himself and State Chairman Drew would be permitted to work to the prejudice of his candidacy. "Mr. Drew and I are on the best of terms," he said. "The Lafayette County delegation will go to Saratoga solidly in my support." Chairman Drew could not be found to corroborate this interesting intelligence.'"

"'Corroborate!'" cried McQuade, dashing down the sheet; "that's good! 'Corroborate' is good!"

"But I do."

McQuade's jaw dropped.

"Just say that again," he begged plaintively. "Say it slow."

"So far as it has to do with our political relations, Redfern's statement is true."

"And th' Lafayette County delegation — oh, somebody wake me up!"

"The Lafayette County delegation must endorse Redfern to a man."

"Excuse this man."

"Excusing nobody who holds down a delegate's chair. I sent for you to tell you this."

His smile seemed to qualify the rigor of his statement and McQuade brightened.

"Casino or Old Maid is nearer my caliber," he admitted. "I never had th' head f'r poker."

"There is no bluff about instructing the delegates."

"Honest Injun?"

"It's virtually the price of your reëlection."

"What!"

"I'll not say that Redfern could have prevented your renomination, but you know pretty well what he could do at the polls. Lafayette County is loyal, but not loyal enough for a family jar."

McQuade's skin turned a fine scarlet.

"Then count me out," he shouted hotly, banging the desk with his huge fist. "You shan't

take orders fr'm that red porpoise on Larry McQuade's account by a long chalk. Th' Assembly be damned!"

"Redfern made no threats. I gave him no chance. The suggestion to instruct came from me."

"An' f'r me!"

"Partly, Larry. Then, too, wouldn't it be a queer sort of state chairman who'd permit a rumpus in his own county?"

McQuade took an uneasy turn of the room.

"On th' level, Phil," he demanded suddenly, "could you see that man made governor at any price?"

Drew met his look and query squarely.

"I shouldn't want to see a man with a yellow streak like his made dog-catcher."

McQuade's smile gurgled into a chuckle, the chuckle became a laugh, the laugh waxed to a roar. Then a tap came at the door. One of the clerical force handed Drew a card.

"Show him in," he said, and flicked the pasteboard over to his friend.

"Great Cats!" McQuade whistled. "James Y. himself! What's my cue?"

"Harmony," Drew answered. "Harmony—with your ears wide open."

CHAPTER XIV

REDFERN boomed a sonorous good morning from the doorway.

"I just ran in—" he began, and caught sight of McQuade.

"Don't stop runnin' because of me," whipped in the Irishman with a spacious grin.

Clumsy at fence, Redfern was for the moment discomfited, but Drew promptly took the situation in hand.

"I'm sure you'll be glad to see one of your future delegates," he said, putting forward a chair. "We just had Saratoga on the carpet."

The candidate's geniality opened like a tropic flower.

"Friend McQuade is quite of our way of thinking then?"

"On the main proposition, quite," pursued Drew, smoothly. "I had not yet explained to him your liberal interpretation of our delegates' instructions. You see, McQuade, Mr. Redfern makes it a point of pride that the nomination, if

it come at all, must be his early in the balloting. He refuses to make himself a party to a prolonged contest, and he proposes accordingly to give our people free rein after the third — it was the third ballot, wasn't it, we finally agreed upon?"

"The third," assented Redfern; and repeated his precise words of the night before, "Then let your delegates vote as they will."

Drew's attention was presently absorbed by his telephone, and Redfern, finding nothing to say to McQuade, took himself off. McQuade lingered.

"That was a hurry-up call all right, all right," he sung out as Drew turned to him again. "But I tattooed that third ballot proviso on my brain tissue."

"I knew you would grasp the point. His calling was a great piece of luck. When I drew that from him last night, there was no witness."

"Now he may howl, but he won't dare lie."

"Exactly."

McQuade ruminated profoundly.

"Well," he said finally, "we've coaxed white-winged Peace t' roost in Lafayette County. It's now up t' you an' Spedding t' save th' state fr'm th' consequences."

"I think we may safely leave that to Spedding."

McQuade guffawed.

"Don't tell me you two haven't got this whole move cut an' dried," he said admiringly. "Well, I'm off. See you in Saratoga."

"No half-hearted support of your candidate, Larry."

"Watch me!"

McQuade played his assigned part with the gusto of an actor of the old school. Drew glimpsed him first at Saratoga the day before the convention in a much be-badged company, two hundred strong, who late in the afternoon broke into the sylvan quadrangle of the vast hotel to the racketing of Two Rivers' crack brass band. The boomers wore silk hats of divers styles, eras, and states of preservation, but with their headgear formal splendor had at once its beginning and end. Mere buttons could not constrain coats and waistcoats in that melting heat, and the consequent display of crumpled shirt-fronts, starred, barred and polka-dotted, was by competent critics pronounced the most extraordinary of recent years. Banners were almost as plentiful among them as badges, setting forth that whatsoever was patriotic, statesmanlike, and politically of good report, that same the candidate embodied whose florid portrait they bore.

"Boys, what's th' matter with James Y. Redfern?" demanded an insinuating voice which Drew identified readily as McQuade's.

The two hundred roared into the elms their leather-lunged conviction that "he" was all right.

"Who's all right?" inquired McQuade, politely, cupping his big fist to an ear-trumpet.

"R-E-D-F-E-R-N!"

Descending a gentle hill where a fountain played, they wheeled and crossed to the historic cottage tenanted year after year by Spedding whom, unseen and irresponsive, they cheered before breaking ranks. McQuade sighted Drew, and came shouldering through the knots of politicians harbored by the shaded piazza where he sat.

"It's th' first time I've showed up at convention in a plug hat," he imparted in a hoarse whisper. "It's a part of th' disguise, an' I've a straw in my grip against th' unmaskin'. You'll have noticed th' genteel air it gave them dukes an' earls what just marched round. Respectability's our watchword. Say, if that crew was all delegates now!"

"Then I dare say we'd do some lively pandering to the better element," Drew said jocularly, his eyes upon the Redfern badge which McQuade jerked conspicuously to the fore.

"Ain't it beauteous? Ain't he th' dog-catcher's ideal now?" Then, his face sobering, he added anxiously: "Phil, you don't suppose he has a chance? He claims three hundred delegates."

"Claims," Drew shrugged. "Livingston claims three hundred and fifty, Scott a hundred and seventy-five or eighty, and the 'also-ran' contingent anywhere from fifty to a hundred apiece. There are only seven hundred and some odd delegates in all. Somebody's lying!"

"Oh, Saratoga air is full of pipe dreams, of course," McQuade admitted, "but it's no fairy tale that James Y. has friends. I wouldn't worry a minute if Spedding was O.K. They're sayin' he's here against his doctor's orders."

Drew nodded gravely.

"Spedding compromised by bringing the doctor along. It's the last fortnight's hot weather that has pulled him down."

"He's inside, I take it," remarked McQuade, his glance compassing the swarming candidates and their hangers-on which this cottage of all lured most. "Look f'r honey where th' bees buzz!"

The spruce correspondent of a New York daily addressed an inquiry to Drew about the last

rumored "slate," and McQuade took himself off. He caromed blithely from group to group, drifting from the wooded court to the cigar-stand of the lobby, from lobby to outer veranda, and from outdoors in again on the flowing tide which set ceaselessly toward the bar. These days held for him the rarest savor of all the year.

As night fell the singular community — drowsy foothill village under winter skies, by summer a city with urban passions and urban vices — assumed the hectic gayety of a carnival. The convention chancing early, the persons who ostensibly seek Saratoga for its healing virtues, and the unabashed hordes who know mineral waters mainly as "chasers" to liquids more exhilarating, for once rubbed astonished, yet on the whole, friendly elbows. The high-pillared hotel verandas of unknown architecture echoed to the din of clubs marching and countermarching beneath the leafy arches of the street, their flamboyant banners proclaiming "Onondaga County solid for Livingston," "Lafayette for Redfern," or Scott as "The Farmer's Friend"; the curio bazaars, glaring with electricity and exotic color, did their seductive utmost; the politician bestowed his meaningless handshake; the gambler insinuated his glittering chance; the tout prof-

fered his seamy wisdom; the wanton smiled her painted smile.

By noon on the morrow the political element of this chaos ceased boiling in and out the great hotels and packed the flag-draped convention hall. The galleries had been crammed for hours with a welter of boomers and sightseers who beguiled the wait with spasmodic outbursts for Redfern, Livingston, or another "favorite son," or in egging on the rivalry between the various bands. Men shuttled to and fro among the placards below, as the floor filled, buttonholing, whispering, gesticulating, the obscurest the most self-important. The real celebrities always came late.

Wentworth, snowy-haired and impressive, sauntered down an aisle at length, cheered to the rafters and specially marked by the bandmasters. Maddox followed shortly, bending his thick neck awkwardly to the shouts of his henchmen. Last of all came Spedding. He was spied almost as he set foot in the building; the lookout shouted "Spedding," and "Spedding, Spedding" ran from delegation to delegation and from floor to galleries. The bands crashed into pæons of welcome, harmonious in fury alone, and amid cheer on cheer the frail old man made his painful way down the central aisle to his own county delega-

tion. They cheered him step by step, cheered him even as he sat, cheered till he slowly rose and bowed, and bowed again. No convention of the many he had attended and dominated had so welcomed him. Few here had hoped to see him at all. Most thought that this convention would be his last.

The auditorium quieted at the tap of Drew's gavel.

"I am directed by the state committee," he began in level conversational tones, and forthwith set the machinery of the convention in motion by naming the temporary chairman. With the end of the invocation by a comfortable-looking bishop who was visiting the Springs, the business of organization went forward apace. The permanent officers had succeeded the temporary, the platform been read, and a recess taken till five o'clock before the mere spectators had fairly made a beginning of enjoying themselves after the morning's tedious wait. The reporters, scribbling away like mad, qualified their word painting of the enfeebled Spedding's entrance with the pregnant comment that the great boss's convention was being forwarded with every whit of his old-time deftness and despatch.

With the taking of the recess the cauldron

below stairs again began to seethe. The stage held a committee meeting. Spedding and his fellow triumvirs were seen to leave the floor. The spectators resorted once more to the rival bands for diversion.

McQuade intercepted Drew at the door of a committee room.

"Redfern's just bagged th' Monroe delegation on condition that Lafayette backs their man f'r comptroller," he announced in a thick whisper. "It means a bigger showin' in th' first round, but I had t' look pleasant."

"Right," Drew assented hurriedly, disengaging his lapel. "The Monroe man was our move anyhow."

"An' th' red devil is braggin' that gobs of votes 'll swing t' him on th' second ballot! New York an' Brooklyn are split every which way."

"As usual. Excuse me now, Larry."

"Maddox is an old snake!"

"Spedding is a snake charmer," Drew laughed back.

Cool, imperturbable, the old man chuckled when, illustrating McQuade's mannerisms, Drew repeated his forebodings.

"Maddox proved most tractable," he smiled. "We got together beautifully."

"He used Redfern as you predicted?"

"Oh, yes. It is Maddox's view that the party below the Bronx ought to cut a wider swathe at Saratoga, and he took his own way of impressing it."

"And you applied your famous cement?"

"Just a trowelful. Maddox only wanted his doubts resolved about a little federal patronage, and a place made on the ticket for his friend from Troy."

"Redfern was a convenient wooden horse?"

"Yes," Spedding grinned. "History repeats itself. But the Greeks won't sack Troy town just yet. When I'm gone—" he paused, his eyes shadowing—"well, the Greeks will bear watching, Philip; they'll bear watching. Maddox is nursing ambitions for state leadership, if I know the symptoms, and you know I'm a bit of a specialist in diagnosing that disease. I would spare the party the rule of a mere office pedler. That's one reason why I count so on you."

By five the hall settled itself in a tense hush of expectation. The real play was about to begin. Again Spedding reaped a harvest of plaudits as he entered. In the popular fancy the show was of his giving. The speeches putting the various candidates in nomination had the closest attention,

those in Redfern's and Livingston's behalf rousing the greatest ado. Redfern's boomers banked a large section of one gallery; Livingston's another over against them; while a smaller group midway between, yelled "Scott! Scott! We want Scott!" with the concerted energy of a steam calliope.

The speechmaking reached its end. Actors and audience straightened in their seats. The chairman directed the calling of the roll. The balloting began:—

"Albany?"

Spedding's own county topped the list, and the crowd strained to listen. Would the great leader show by a straw the blowing of the wind? Then, as the chairman of the delegation announced the result, the convention roared with laughter. With favoritism toward none Spedding had scattered his votes among all the candidates.

On fared the roll-call of the sixty counties,—a sounding list, great men's names, in most part, starred with Indian quaintnesses. But the convention cared nothing for the latent poetry in Cattaraugus, Genesee, Niagara, Onondaga, Saratoga, Tioga, or Wyoming. They were symbols merely, connoting large or trivial blocks of votes on whose fluctuating combinations impassioned human beings built or wrecked their very human

hopes. It was done at length, and the adepts knew the footings almost before the last chairman rose in his place; but the great crowd to which it was a spectacle waited breathlessly for the official pronouncement.

"Redfern 236; Livingston 141; Scott 94;"—so on through the several candidates among whom Drew had found himself unexpectedly plumped, through the irrepressible enthusiasm of three delegates from the remote confines of the Southern Tier.

No choice!

Nevertheless, the Redfern shouters of the gallery worked themselves into a red-faced delirium over their candidate's lead, and his lieutenants on the floor buzzed about among the delegations in frantic preparation for the impending second ballot. Spedding sat peacefully through the uproar, smiling upon all; Wentworth, one aisle distant, twirled his eye-glasses in dreamy abstraction; Maddox was a stone image.

Then the roll began all over again and ran its appointed course from Albany to Yates. The knowing looked for changes now. The first ballot had been but a show of more or less obvious strength. Now was the time for the swinging in of unexpected reserves. The air

was rife with predictions of stampedes and other picturesque phenomena. The small fry would scuttle, so they would. The big fellows would show their hands. Watch for changes in New York and Kings! Keep an eye on that anti-machine gang from Erie! But the call had gone no great way before the soothsayers and penny-prophets saw themselves put to confusion. The stampede was manifestly behindhand; the small fry were not scuttling actively; the big fellows held their ground, no more; New York and Kings were apathetic; Erie the recalcitrant was at peace.

"Redfern 236; Livingston 141 —"

Nobody cared what petty shiftings had transpired among the other candidates. Redfern and Livingston were stationary! It was a time to sit at the feet of new prophets and hedge bets. The universal eye of expectation focussed itself upon the enigmatic third ballot. Just then, however, the right man made the right motion and the convention adjourned.

CHAPTER XV

To the casual eye the night seemed last night over again. The main thoroughfare throbbed with the same febrile animation; the great hotel corridors and verandas hummed like the purlieus of a hive. The initiated, however, were less interested in the vain clamor of veranda, corridor, and street, than in the relatively peaceful court on whose fresh greenness and diamond-dropping fountain Spedding's cottage gave. Livingston's headquarters neighbored the leader's closely; Redfern's rooms were hard by; Scott's not far distant. The newspaper men dubbed it "Candidates' Row."

It was in truth the newspaper men who just now felt the liveliest concern in Candidates' Row. They knew to a man who and what were the visitors who had drifted nonchalantly over Spedding's doorsill during the past half hour. Maddox had gone in recently; Wentworth earlier; Drew, the state chairman, had been closeted with Spedding since dinner; the chairman of the executive committee had entered joking ponderously with the state

superintendent of public works; the others hailed from various points of the compass and answered to "Judge," "Congressman," "Colonel," and other titles of more or less consequence and dignity. All told, they tallied twelve or fifteen, and they illustrated strikingly the widely differing temperaments it had been Spedding's art to yoke in harmonious service for a common end. In newspaper parlance, the Triumvirate was in solemn conclave with the Inner Circle.

The scene indoors justified curiosity, since the ten minutes just elapsed had witnessed the settling of the governorship. The men lounged in informal knots around the cottage's smoke-hazed main room, but everybody was mentally alert and the eyes sought a common centre.

"I assume, then, that we are of one mind," Spedding was saying. "To nominate either Redfern or Livingston would jeopardize the organization. Both are men of approved loyalty and both have friends. Unfortunately they're equally rich in enemies and each man's worst enemy is the other. Already they're cutting each other at sight. It's easy guessing what the unsuccessful man would be tempted to do in November if his rival heads the ticket. Judge Howard and Mr. Clark — suppose you wait on Livingston.

Colonel Brown, will you and Senator Zimmerman put the situation before Redfern? Suggest that they make their withdrawal in favor of Henderson or Scott. I take it we're agreed that either Henderson or Scott would command hearty support?" His keen eye travelled round the room from man to man. "Senator Wentworth? Mr. Maddox? Mr. Drew? Very well, gentlemen."

The ambassadors fared forth. Wentworth with a little sigh of relief began talking of grape-culture to a Chautauqua County state committeeman. Drew took a campaign suggestion over to Maddox on the sofa, who said, "Yes, yes," at mechanical intervals as he puffed at his eternal cigar. In another corner an up-country editor was retailing a drummer's joke. From somewhere without penetrated the lilting rhythm of a Strauss waltz; Maddox, the strangely musical, inclined a listening ear; Spedding's forefinger tapped his arm-chair, out of time.

Two of the messengers reëntered.

"Well, gentlemen?" Spedding queried.

Judge Howard emitted the prefatory cough which used always to forerun his charge to the jury when he was still a luminary of the bench.

"Our diplomacy," he said, "has been wholly successful. Mr. Livingston assures us that he

will cheerfully withdraw if the party is to be the gainer."

Spedding nodded his thanks and drew the judge aside. The room discussed Livingston, dealing tenderly with him as one dead.

"I've always thought him a thoroughbred," said one.

"Blood will tell," declared a second.

"He favors his great relative the Chancellor," said Wentworth. "I remember, sir, that on one occasion —"

The piazza clattered to hasty feet. The door of the council-chamber was flung open. Redfern burst in on his highest horse, the colonel and the state senator dogging his heels.

"No, by God," he rapped out, "I'll not withdraw!"

Drew slipped round behind the flustered ambassadors and closed the door against the curious who had marked Redfern's furious passage. The maddened man spun about.

"Ay, lock the doors," he stormed. "Cork the windows! Bottle the dirty work in!"

One or two who really wished him well darted forward with remonstrances.

"Don't be a damned fool!" urged a fellow-editor.

"You're throwing away your future," another man warned.

He shook them off and stalked across the floor to Spedding.

"It's the Czar himself I've come to see," he vociferated. "I've had mollycoddling enough from you poor-spirited sheep who wear his collar."

Wentworth, who stood nearest, laid a hand upon his arm.

"My dear sir," he begged, "pray calm yourself. Consider Mr. Spedding's frail health —"

"Frail! He's throttling the will of the convention with a hand of iron!"

Spedding's clear voice made itself heard.

"Redfern," he said quietly, "this isn't a woman's congress. Sit down."

The irate man vacillated an instant, glowering at the thin white face with its burning eyes; then dropped stiffly into the chair some one pushed to his hand.

"I'm not getting white treatment," he protested in lower key.

"You're getting what Mr. Livingston did not ask — our personal explanation." He tersely recapitulated the situation as it presented itself to the conferees. "Livingston admits the reasonableness of this view," he concluded.

"You, in a more dispassionate moment, will see —"

"No, I won't," cried Redfern, jumping up. "I've sought no factional row. It's my belief that Livingston's a stool-pigeon put up solely to force one. I've a clear lead in the balloting, and, by heaven, I mean to stick it out!"

"You repudiate the united judgment of your party leaders?"

"I'll make my stand against the tyranny of one-man power!"

The room hushed at that. The other party had often lampooned and cartooned Spedding as an autocrat; the temporarily disaffected within his own ranks had sometimes murmured; till this moment, however, no man had had the hardihood to stand up and defy him to his face. Every detail of the scene etched itself upon the onlookers' memories. Full-blooded, massive-framed, Redfern was the personification of arrogant good health; Spedding tarried palpably on the brink where flesh and spirit part. But the mastery never for a moment hung in doubt. By mind Spedding had long ruled, by mind at the grave's maw he retained his supremacy.

"Another reformer?" he said, flickering a spectral smile. "There seems to be some mis-

conception as to my poor part in this. You are free to question these down-trodden gentlemen about you. Begin your crusade at once."

Redfern glared round as if tempted to assume the gauge. Wentworth was regarding him with wondering gravity; Maddox looked him coldly in the eye and sent forth a lazy coil of smoke; Drew's pale face was expressionless; his avowed friends, even, turned away. One and all, their sympathies lay with the veteran. The warmest feeling he evoked was a sort of frigid pity.

It would have frozen some men; this man — the Firebrand — it only fanned to added folly.

"Bunco me out of this nomination, and you'll rue it," he proclaimed. "There's a little question of succession the Legislature will settle in January" — his eye sought Wentworth — "and I've friends!"

Spedding's wan face for an instant flamed red.

"Threats!" he flashed. "I'll let you know, sir, I'm not dead yet. Do your prettiest — and be damned!"

The night wore on; those slept who could — and one of them was Spedding; the morning dawned. Drew rose early, as was his habit, and sauntered down the deep-shaded street whose

wetted dust lay pleasantly odorous in the sprinkler's wake troubled only as yet by the normal traffic of the villagers. Entering Congress Spring Park he followed the gravelled paths round the mimic lake to a remote dewy glen where for an hour he thought such thoughts as pleased him best. A keeper coming to feed the deer and a squirrel foraging independently brought breakfast to mind at last, and he began a reluctant return. A nursemaid or two had straggled in by now and the spring-water pavilion held its handful of the faithful to whom Saratoga yet remains literally a watering-place. Among these latter Drew unexpectedly spied McQuade blarneying a comely young woman who presided at the fount.

"Mineral water! At this hour!" he chaffed as his lieutenant came forward with a widening smile.

"That peerless goddess," McQuade volunteered, "winters in an Albany millinery shop. I'd drink Ingy ink if she dipped it up."

They turned up Broadway, quickening to its daily unrest. Gaudy omnibuses flashed round from the early trains; newsboys hawked their wares; the high-pillared verandas held growing knots of jaded men who took up the ceaseless swarming in and out of yesterday.

"James Y. has been joggin' my memory that

he's still got somethin' comin' fr'm Lafayette County," McQuade confided. "I came round to tell you last night, but you'd turned in."

"Redfern spoke to you of the third ballot?"

"Right after your pow-wow at Spedding's broke up."

"What did you reply?"

"'We're yours truly till th' third round is over,' says I. 'If you can't make good by then, why here's t' th' man that can,' I says. 'Th' convention can't sit all summer,' says I. 'Ay, th' third ballot,' says he, scowlin' most murderous. 'Voice of Jacob, hands of Esau,' says he, whatever that may mean."

The New York and Albany papers fluttered in uncounted hands. "Livingston Out!" flared across the page of one. Another proclaimed that "Redfern Stands Pat!" Most hinted at dramatic scenes overnight with details so fanciful that those who knew the truth could pooh-pooh the whole story as a mare's nest. The actual facts had not leaked out. Redfern excepted, no man had been present who was not a stickler for harmony imbued with the spirit of compact organization, while even Redfern, his defiance issued, had become a miracle of discretion.

The sheet which headed its convention news,

"All Eyes On Spedding!" stated a figurative truth. Spedding was invisible, but all the morning long till the convention reassembled, men came and went from his door. From the merest mite of a district messenger to Wentworth's stately self, not one soul was suffered to pass out uninterviewed by the little army of news gatherers encamped round about, and when Spedding at last made his appearance, leaning heavily on Drew's arm, it was under fire of cameras sufficient to herald the President himself. He paused a moment at his carriage door, smiling at their importunities.

"A tip on the winner?" he laughed. "What do you say to me, boys? If the candidates can't settle it among themselves, perhaps I'll enter the race."

The great convention hall, jammed to suffocation, cheered him as it had cheered his every coming. He was a great prestidigitator in the everyday man's prosaic imagination, and rumor, abreast with desire, predicted that he was about to exhibit a most spectacular piece of black art which the roll-call on the third ballot would set in motion.

It began tamely enough, however. Chairman after chairman made his announcement with yes-

terday's intonation and yesterday's combinations. Redfern was holding his own, and Livingston's name, prophecy to the contrary, was still before the convention. But as the call went forward, there developed a slight yet unmistakable drift to Scott. It was not strong enough to alter the situation materially, — Redfern still led and still fell short of victory, — but it was a sign for the understanding which became plain print for the dullest when one of the counties possessing a large block of delegates attempted out of order to change its vote in Scott's favor.

"Scott — Scott! We — want — Scott!" came the chanted slogan of the Farmer's Friend's friends in the central gallery.

Scott right speedily they had. Men scurried to and fro among the delegations, red-faced, clothing awry, bubbling mystery. The fourth roll-call began. Albany still distributed its impartial ballots, but Allegany swung to Scott; Broome; Cattaraugus; and so, gathering momentum down the alphabet, the tide swept, till Kings County's votes, solidly delivered, left the result no longer in doubt. Redfern, sitting to-day with his own delegation, retained a stubborn handful, but he knew himself a beaten man. As New York voted, Drew observed Maddox send him an

envoy who whispered earnestly. Pale for once, Redfern nodded without speech.

"Maddox handed him a pointer t' climb into th' band wagon," whispered McQuade, mirthfully.

When the uproar following the announcement of Scott's triumph lulled, Redfern got upon his feet, and with repressed feeling moved that the convention's choice be made unanimous.

"I declare I'm half sorry for the fellow," Spedding told Drew. "But Redfern spells Maddox."

"And Maddox — what?"

"Ay, what!"

As Drew finally quitted the convention hall, he ran into Redfern and was about to pass him with a bow when the editor surlily blocked his way.

"I know your work when I see it," he said, his voice tremulous with passion. "I know whom to thank."

Drew met his black look contemptuously.

"Don't play the baby act," he retorted. "Take off your coat and hustle for the ticket like a man."

Redfern boiled over in curses.

"Don't you worry about the ticket," he concluded. "I'll work as I've always worked. And there's something else I'll do. I'll get damned good and square with you."

CHAPTER XVI

THAT evening Drew spent with Katherine. Wentworth carried Spedding home with him for a few days, and he insisted that Drew should at least bide the night. Once before that summer he had been asked to "The Beeches," but politics had prevented. This time, after the dust and din of battle, the lure was not to be resisted.

For coolness they supped on the terrace over which wandered fitful river breezes, rose-scented by the garden. Care-free seemingly as a boy, Spedding rattled from nonsense to nonsense with the girl. Drew was content to drop an occasional word and watch Katherine at the chafing-dish around whose tending she cast an unsuspected poetry. Wentworth, listening with his benign look, presided over all like some visiting Olympian.

At twilight they two loitered in the garden while the old men smoked and chatted in the pergola above.

"I'm all for crossing tea-roses with hybrid remontants nowadays," the senator was saying.

"It's my theory, Henry, that a hardy Jacqueminot or —"

His voice trailed off among names as fragrant as the flowers themselves. Drew turned to Katherine with a laugh.

"It would amaze the world to overhear your father and Boss Spedding to-night," he said. "To fit the popular notion they should be plotting something diabolic, say a gerrymander."

"They seldom talk politics here."

"Just roses?"

"Roses — gardening — their boyhood. I never could understand why till lately. I thought it dull at 'The Beeches.' I wanted to bring in the noisy world. That was before I had seen much of it."

Drew was mystified.

"Shall I ever know you!" he exclaimed. "Are you ever twice the same? Which is the real Katherine — politician, water-witch, social favorite, cloistered chatelaine?"

"I would tell you if I knew," she laughed. "Just now I'm happiest here — at peace. I owe it to you that it is as it is. Somehow — in Washington — you seemed to shoulder everything. I stopped worrying over father's reëlection then. By and by, when we reopened 'The Beeches,' I realized that I scarcely thought of politics at all."

"Your letters told me that — while they came."

"It seemed folly to worry with you on guard. You see I trust our field-marshal."

How much, how little, did it mean? The quivering poplars which edged the garden filtered a ghostly moonlight upon her hair, her face, her neck, upon the white arms and shoulders gleaming under fragile lace-work; while in her eyes it lit an intimate kindness, not seen there before, which made his heart leap and his lips frame a message they all but voiced. Then Wentworth's call broke the spell. Afterward, his reason undrugged by her nearness, Drew counted the interruption fortunate. It was not yet time to hazard an avowal. Since when were trusting and loving synonymous?

Emboldened by his Saratoga exploit which did him no apparent injury, Spedding a fortnight later broke his doctor's leading-strings again, and abruptly reappeared at his old haunt by the ocean. Here also followed Wentworth for over Sunday, bringing Katherine and Harriet Reeves. Forewarned of Katherine's coming by Spedding, Drew pushed forward Saturday's work at top speed, hurried down to the sea by rail, avoided various man-traps set for him by politicians in

lobby and veranda, and, gaining his own room, was amazed to encounter his nephew.

"You, Dick!" he exclaimed.

Harris grinned genially.

"You don't mind my making myself at home, old man?" he asked. "I could not get a room for love or lucre, but a clerk I knew let me take your key."

"We'll have in a cot or something," Drew replied promptly. "And I've a little surprise for you. Katherine and Harriet are coming."

"Have come," Dick corrected. "Ages ago. I had the girls in surf-bathing most of the afternoon."

Drew's expression was blank.

"You knew their plans?"

"Oh, yes. Katherine dropped me a line. Great view from these windows to-day. You can see the Highlands and the Hook distinctly."

Drew addressed himself thoughtfully to his toilet. Since when had Katherine resumed letter-writing with Dick? An elaborate "Ahem!" presently notified him that his clothes were the subject of earnest inspection.

"Well?" he said, a trifle consciously.

"Thunder! But you're looking youthful," Dick observed. "What brand of elixir of life do

you tipple? Stunning suit that! New York tailoring, I presume?"

"Yes."

"New York hat?"

"Yes."

"Ditto shirt — shoes — tie?"

"Yes."

"Thunder!" reiterated Dick. "What's got into you? The girls will think I'm *your* uncle."

Mere clothes could not fortify Drew against a depression which, beginning now, grew denser with each succeeding hour. It did not conduce to youthfulness in a man who had had no time in his busy life for dancing to see Katherine float through a waltz or two-step in Dick's arms. Nor was he much mollified by her sitting out one or two dances with him, since those particular numbers failed somehow to interest Dick who clung continually at elbow. He was not happy by day when, upon shaking off the politicians for an hour with Katherine, he would find her monopolized by his nephew; and he came to think it something more than perverse fate that Katherine should always pair with Dick, did the four stroll by the sea. Finally, during the last precious hours of Sunday evening, he chanced suddenly upon them in an obscure corner of the great

veranda, and touched the very nadir of his despair. He saw instantly that he had snapped the thread of a most intimate talk, and he could not swear that Harris did not drop Katherine's hand. Both were palpably out of countenance and greeted him with unnatural gayety. Casting about for any pretext to take himself away, he asked Harriet's whereabouts and was directed with unseemly haste. He had no consuming desire for Harriet's society, nor had she apparently much inclination to talk to him. She seemed pensive, distrait, unhappy like himself.

In the morning the party broke up, Spedding leaving with the others. The veteran now realized that Saratoga had registered the high-water mark of his revived energy, and returned to the humdrum of the physician's rule without protest, almost with relief. Drew himself passed no more nights at the beach. The state headquarters stood open day and night and the storm-centre of the national campaign seethed with feverish activity scarcely a bow-shot away. New York was playing its familiar rôle of the pivotal state, and, though he never doubted the result, Drew worked and made others work as if defeat were a possibility not remote.

The end came at last. He harmonized his last

factional row, received his last up-state report, denied his last roorback, ridiculed the rival state chairman's latest claim, issued his own final forecast, and journeyed home to vote, stopping briefly in Albany for a word with Spedding. At each of their recent conferences Drew had thought the old man gentler and more silent, but to-day, as the competent prime minister of his own choice, to whom he had shifted burden after burden, went over the advices from state and nation, he was keenly alert.

"We've got 'em on the run, Phil," he said jubilantly. "You've been all that I hoped of you. You put your heart into it this time. You've found it's a game that's a game, eh?"

Drew gave him the answer he sought.

"But it wears, it wears," Spedding added, as they parted. "Once I had nerves like yours. Now, little as you've left me to do, I feel the tension. I shall persuade this sawbones of mine to ship me off awhile. I have my eye on a spot in some most 'delectable mountains.' It's one of those places where you loaf because you must. Nothing more exciting than the sunset, you know. And sleep! It's a famous place to sleep."

Drew voted betimes on the morrow, and made

ready for an early return to New York. Dick, with whom he breakfasted, published his intention of accompanying him.

"There's no place like New York on Election Night," he proclaimed. "Paris en fête is the nearest parallel."

"But the *Post-Messenger?*"

"Oh, the boys will be on the jump to-night, of course," Dick answered easily. "Corn in a popper is no comparison. No ordinary business could pry me away from it, but I've something scheduled in the little hamlet of New York that discounts election returns. I mean to put you on as soon as I decently can," he added in a sudden burst of affectionate confidence. "I'd like to tell you this blessed minute, for after a fashion I owe you my good luck. I'm under a sort of embargo, however. It wouldn't be playing fair by her, and she — oh, by gravy! I must muzzle myself right here and now."

Drew had imagined that he definitely accepted the idea of Katherine's and Dick's reconciliation. He knew now that he had all the time hoped otherwise. What did the young fellow's irrepressible elation, his slip of the tongue, his sudden flight to New York, signify but the rapt mood of an accepted lover! Katherine was in New York.

Only that morning he had come upon her name and the senator's among the hotel arrivals.

Something in his face gave Harris pause.

"You look done up, old man," he remarked. "The campaign has been too many for you."

Drew braced himself.

"Wait till you see the enemy," he advised.

"But you are off color," Dick continued his galling diagnosis. "You've overtaxed yourself. A minute ago you looked like putty. You're thinner, too, I see now, and you're off your feed. Your breakfast lies there untasted."

"Hang it, man, leave my symptoms alone!" Drew snapped. "You're babbling like an old woman."

"And you're as nervous as a bridegroom," concluded Dick, soothingly. "Instead of posting back to New York you had better see a doctor."

Drew laid firmer hold upon his self-control, but young Harris found him a preoccupied travelling companion. The drear November landscape reflected his mental outlook. He had been an intruder. Youth, arrogant youth, had taught him his place. The humiliation of it, that he should have again brought upon himself the bitter lesson of the liner! The burden of the car trucks' rhythmic chant was, "Youth — Youth — Youth!"

CHAPTER XVII

It was growing dusk as they swung into the city. The long monotonous vistas of the cross streets were dotted with bonfires. The fanfare of discordant horns had begun. Harris leaned eagerly forward over the apron of the hansom as they drove from the station to the hotel, his gay mood perfectly attuned to all he saw. Drew relaxed in his corner, with lack-lustre eye, nerve-tortured by the swelling din. Madison Square as they gained it was taking on its evening bravery. The garish electric advertisements already flung their fiery messages across the night.

"Pickles! Cigars!" fulminated Dick. "To what base uses are those flaming symbols chained! They should spell some tremendous prophecy."

"A marriage?"

Dick fenced at him with a playful forefinger, the mirthlessness of the man's laugh all unremarked.

"'Ware the embargo," he warned.

The hotel was filling with politicians and sight-

seers, and a reporter made a dive for the well-known figure of the state chairman at the very door.

"Yes, I am to receive the returns here," Drew answered. "Yes, the Weather Bureau gave us our sort to-day. You might almost call it 'offensive partisanship' on the forecaster's part. No, I've nothing to add to my estimate of yesterday. Something to say later? Perhaps."

When Harris rejoined him presently for dinner, it was with undiminished good spirits, and in full evening array.

"Not exactly a knockabout costume, is it?" he smiled. "But then it's a very special kind of returns I'm to receive."

Drew's appetite still flagged, but Harris let it pass unnoticed. He was in far too sublimated a frame of mind for food and hurried absently away at the conclusion of their unsocial meal. His uncle saw him depart with blended misery and relief.

It was time for definite news from the brownstone precincts at least, and he passed through the growing throngs of the corridors to the apartments regularly set apart for the state headquarters. The main reception room resounded with the metallic chatter of a half a dozen telegraph instru-

ments. A county committeeman of local prominence was reading aloud the returns as received from the operators, while hard by figured a veteran of unnumbered political battles, his table littered with comparative data of other years.

"This represents a gain of twelve thousand over the total vote cast by the same wards in the last gubernatorial campaign," the announcer was saying as Drew looked in upon the tobacco-fogged room. "Compared with the figures of—" The sentence lost itself in a tumult of cheers.

Drew entered the quieter atmosphere of his own office to which the returns were being steadily forwarded from the greater room. This chamber had its own wire as well and was in direct communication by telephone with the national headquarters across the square. The chairman of the executive committee was reading the slips as they came, with perhaps five or six auditors who hailed Drew's entrance with a fire of jocular greetings, to which he replied in kind. He contributed to a pool on Scott's plurality in the city, which Maddox, dropping in on his way to his own haunts farther down town, had instituted, and took a chair beside Wentworth who sat placidly in the corner where Spedding had presided so often in other years. No stranger to the

group would have dreamed that the senator had aught at stake. He listened benignantly to the returns, making no comment. When he opened his lips, he spoke of topics far removed from the throbbing life immediately at hand. Even when Drew, about ten o'clock, was able to turn to him with the assurance that the legislative returns made his reëlection to the Senate beyond peradventure sure, his serenity was unruffled.

"I never doubted the people's saving common sense," he said tranquilly.

Drew and his fellow-chairman exchanged grim smiles. They knew by what heroic trephining of the people's indifferent skull the saving common sense had come.

"Shall we send Katherine a message?" Drew asked.

"She is at the theatre," answered Wentworth. "I shall join her presently. We're promised over at national headquarters for the supper. You will go, of course?"

"No."

"But you ought, sir!"

"Surely," added somebody overhearing. "Scott told me yesterday that you deserved a cabinet portfolio for the work you've done."

Drew shook his head. Wentworth had prodded

his heartache. It was to the theatre Dick had gone with her! He sat in dull apathy after Wentworth left, though the air pulsed with the note of a sweeping victory in state and nation. With a face so masked that even the newspaper folk noted it in their fevered rush, he summed up the harvest of his summer's toil.

"We claim New York by forty thousand," he said tersely. "Scott's plurality will fall but a shade below the President's. An increase on joint ballot in the Legislature insures Senator Wentworth's election in January to succeed himself."

One of the reporters met and recognized Harris outside.

"That uncle of yours is a cool one," he sung out. "Wish I had his Bessemer-steel nerves. I'll do him in a character sketch some day."

"Nobody like him," vaunted Dick.

Drew was sending congratulatory telegrams to Spedding and the President-elect when Harris swooped upon him.

"Come out into the rumpus," he insisted. "It's lovely."

Drew rounded his signature to its last precise up-stroke before he looked up. Dick's lapel bore a diminutive rooster, and he carried a tin horn of

a yard's length. His face beamed an extravagant satisfaction with life. With a sudden magnanimous resolve to meet the lad halfway in his great hour, Drew put out his hand.

"You've evidently got *your* returns, boy," he said.

Dick wrung the proffered hand ecstatically.

"Come out, come out," he urged. "I'll tell you all about it outside. The embargo's raised. She said I could tell you. She likes you herself."

"That's good," Drew managed to return.

"Isn't it? You'll be her uncle too, you see."

Harris left him no time for wincing. With a rapturous blast of his horn he dragged Drew forth into the whooping pandemonium of the streets. A titanic pencil of white radiance from the Garden's searchlight swept the sky; rockets crashed in swift succession from the building's base; the converging canyons of Fifth Avenue and Broadway glowed red and green with Greek fire; in the nearer branches of the park fell a silver rain. When a street-car laboriously stemmed the human tide, the crowd drummed its yellow sides deliriously and surged in upon its wake. The din was incessant.

"Now you know how I feel," shouted the lover.

Drew nodded comprehendingly.

"FOUR! FOUR! FOUR-YEARS-MORE!"

The throng cleft for a company of eminently respectable rollickers of both sexes — young, middle-aged, gray-haired — marching two and two with megaphones improvised from newspapers.

"Fall in," commanded Dick, swinging Drew into line. "Four! Four! Four-years-more! No; that doesn't fit *my* case," he interjected. "Four! Four! Four-hundred-years-more! But I'm leaving you in the dark, and I've already kept you there too long. Many's the time I've wanted to confide. Still, I guess you weren't so blind. It seemed sometimes as if you must know. Take that last night at the beach for instance, when you came upon Katherine and me."

Drew assented limply: —

"I did suspect something."

"I should think you would. It was getting mighty interesting about that time. Whew, but it's been a siege! She couldn't seem to size up her own feelings and tell whether she cared more for Man or a man, and she is such a conscientious girl that she didn't want to give me even the cold comfort of hoping. Toward the end I got des-

perate and tried jealousy, and with Katherine's help —"

"Katherine's help!" Drew's fingers tightened on Dick's arm. "She! She! In heaven's name, boy, which girl are you going to marry?"

"Which!"

"Which?"

"Why, Harriet, of course!"

They eddied into a doorway, the riotous tide rolling by. For a round-eyed instant Harris puzzled. Then he fell violently to pumping Drew's arm.

"And you thought all along I meant Katherine," he cried.

Drew rescued his aching member and answered nothing.

"Yet you congratulated me, and listened to my drool, and —"

"Well, why not?" Drew countered, rallying his wits.

"Why not!" Dick thrust at him with his tin horn, handling it like a rapier. "Why not! As if I couldn't see with half an eye that Katherine is the only —" He broke off to wind an ear-splitting blast.

"Shut up," said Drew, towing him into the stream again.

"Why not! Why not! Why not! Lord Harry, it's as plain as that theatre sign up the street."

"It's plain you're a donkey."

"We'll make it a double wedding."

"I'll make it a funeral, you jackanapes! Have some chivalry about you for Miss Wentworth. I've never broached a word about marriage."

"But you will," Dick retorted, subsiding into happy chuckles. "You will."

At the young fellow's suggestion they laid a course for the newspaper office around which his metropolitan life had circled, and Dick furtively eyed the springiness that had suddenly come into Drew's gait. He hummed the songs of the crowd, laughed at its jokes, condoned its follies. Fetching a wide detour of the roaring mob before the great journal's bulletins, they reached a rear entrance and climbed to the main workroom of the staff.

"Easy to see white man mow, as the Indian said who sat on the fence," Dick murmured, adapting his tone to the hush which brooded over half a hundred desks where as many men in shirt-sleeves bent their tousled heads over tabulating sheets and all the paraphernalia of Election Night. "I've 'mowed' here with a vengeance

and can play Indian now in good conscience. But it will amuse you more to watch the fellows handling the bulletin," he added, moving round the room as the great audience of the street cheered a fresh report.

He nodded here and yonder to some acquaintance under a droplight, whose eyes he intercepted, but whose hands scribbled on without pause. Drew also recognized familiar faces among workers and onlookers alike, and one of the latter pounced upon him for his estimate of the new President's majority in the Electoral College. As he released himself Harris, whom a telegraph editor had beckoned, came rushing back to him and extended a yellow sheet.

"From Albany!" he exclaimed. "Spedding!"

Drew caught the typewritten paper from him. Its beginning ran something like this: —

"Hnry Spddng is dyg. Strckn svng wth scnd prlytc attck t vtrn ldr h gradly snk — "

"Dying!" Drew cried. "No, no! Dick, boy, read this to me! Read!"

CHAPTER XVIII

HARRIS rapidly deciphered the flimsy which outlined the fact of Spedding's second seizure that evening, and the certitude that his life was ebbing to its close.

"I must go to him," Drew said, and started for the street.

Dick was devouring a second despatch. He overtook Drew upon the stair.

"It's no use, Philip," he said gently.

"No use?"

Then he understood. Spedding had made his last governor. While the land rang with the acclaim of victory he had slipped away to his Delectable Mountains, to his "famous place to sleep." The probable, the expected, and yet somehow unexpected, had swiftly come to pass. He had lost his great mentor, his leader, his friend of friends. He faced his great responsibility alone.

They found themselves in the open air. The far-reaching sea of upturned faces levelled its

collective gaze upon a just displayed bulletin in a silence which was strange to the time and place.

"They know it, too," Dick said.

His words roused Drew.

"The senator!" he exclaimed. "It must be broken gently to him. He thought poor Spedding immortal."

Harris peered here and there for a cab and spied one idling at the farther curb. They charged across the street, hurdling the fender of a clanging trolley, and with a shouted direction flung themselves into the vehicle. As they lurched into a cross street to gain a clear course the sombre bulletin gave place to the latest news from Indiana, and with a yell of relief the crowd threw off its unwelcome musings on mortality.

"Beasts," Dick muttered, "callous beasts!" Yet in the next breath he caught himself thinking of his fiancée's loveliness and added, "But it's life."

Drew sat well forward upon his seat, poised to spring. He had the door ajar before they sighted the lights of the square, and leaving the cabman to Dick, was out and off before they fairly reached the jam surging around the pale sky-scraper where the national headquarters were housed. Struggling through to the elevators, he

a moment later attained the national committee's rooms, now rakish, disordered, and well-nigh forsaken. Champagne bottles strewn here, there, and everywhere showed by their wreckage how high the tide of jubilation had swelled. Harris, brought up fuming at the entrance for lack of a card of admission, noted that even the messenger boys streamed by on unsteady legs.

Drew issued hurriedly from the door and made again for the elevators.

"Nearly everybody who's sober is on the tenth floor at supper," he said. "Wentworth and Katherine are there."

"They've not heard then?"

"Down here, yes. It's been kept from the tables."

The applause pointing some speaker's happily rounded phrase pattered down to them as the elevator rose in its shaft, and the scent of the flower-bedecked tables permeated quite to the landing. From a doorway Drew reconnoitred the banquet room. Perhaps two hundred persons — dignitaries civic and national, their wives and daughters — sat in the soft glow of the shaded lights. Halfway down the apartment he glimpsed Katherine between a state official and a multimillionnaire. Wentworth was yet farther removed.

Pencilling a hasty message, Drew intercepted a waiter. At the same instant Harris perceived a newcomer at the turn of the corridor perform the same act; the man's face seemed vaguely familiar.

Marking his messenger's flight, Drew saw his card laid at Katherine's plate. She rose directly and came out to him.

"You have been a prince of field-marshals," she said warmly, offering her hand. "I owe you more than I — But what is it?" — the gravity of his look arresting her. "You've bad news! There's no mistake about — about the Legislature? Don't tell me it's in doubt!"

"It's not the election, Katherine. It's Spedding. Spedding has got through."

She blanched as she grasped the significance of his message.

"And we've sat here!" she said in passionate self-reproach as a gale of laughter swept the room.

Drew launched hurriedly into the ways and means of apprising Wentworth.

"It would best come from you," he suggested.

"Yes," she assented.

"Shall we call him out, or wait till this ghastly thing ends? Not a soul in there knows."

She shrank from the gay jingle of glass kissing glass.

"It may leak out any moment. And I *couldn't* go back! Send him to the cloak-room. I'll tell him in the cloak-room."

Harris startled them with an exclamation.

"The senator has left the table," he warned. "He's making for the other door."

They swung round, staring up the corridor.

"That man is a reporter," Dick added suddenly. "I remember him now. He works for the yellowest rag in Park Row."

They were too late to temper the blow. His face like the marble panel he grasped for support, the old man received the fact at its baldest. He uttered no sound, but his face seemed to age a decade before their eyes. They led him away like a sleep-walker, and when he passed finally from the building to a carriage, he moved with the shambling gait of a nonagenarian. As they drove through a city spent with revelry the dull glow of dying bonfires played intermittently across his wan face. Katherine, who sat caressing his passive fingers, was only less white. Drew and Harris watched in impotent pity.

"I'll take the carriage and fetch Harriet," Dick whispered, casting about for a comforter. "This is a woman's work."

It was preëminently Harriet's work; and till

Mrs. Austin came to relieve her she was a tower of strength to Katherine, and, by indirection, to Wentworth. There was an alarming fainting spell during the night, but it was a more resolute man who journeyed to "The Beeches" on the morrow, and who, two days later, stood in Albany beside the grave of his lifelong friend. Yet he was not the Wentworth of before. Spedding had knit him to the present more intimately than he realized till death cut the bond; and as he stood alone his years appalled him. Old age, the scouted, refused longer to be gainsaid, and set its dread sign manual upon him in characters he could not mistake. Katherine beheld them magnified.

Drew also passed a significant milestone. Each day bore witness that he had entered upon the "dukedom." The press's access of interest in his personality hardly waited upon Spedding's burial. Its speculations jostled the obituaries. The fiction of government by triumvirate was in general discarded. The term triumvir lapsed from current speech. To the enemy the self-contained chairman of the state committee straightway became Boss Drew, while the paragraphers of his own party, hunting new catchwords for new conditions, hit upon the politic

title of First Consul. The cartoonists seized upon this suggestion joyously. Thenceforth when Drew came upon himself in their conceits, his face looked out at him from Napoleonic trappings.

Returning to "The Beeches" upward of a week after the lost leader's funeral, Drew was shocked at the havoc wrought in the senator.

"He broods his days through," Katherine said, "and his nights bring no rest. He moans in his sleep."

"Are your days and nights happier? You are all eyes, Katherine."

"When he is happy, I shall be," she answered.

It seemed to Drew that they had come nearer than before in this time of trouble. In mind and body she had leaned to his support. It was no time to speak what his heart prompted, but he lived in the primrose light of a great hope, and threw himself into a plan for her good.

"A change is imperative for the senator," he told Mrs. Austin. "How shall we manage it?"

"I think the return to Washington will mend matters."

"But Congress will not meet for nearly three weeks, and a fortnight more of this will break

your brother's constitution and Katherine's heart."

Mrs. Austin observed him with quickened interest.

"What Katherine needs is a shaking," she returned. "She never used to be bothered with nerves. As for a change, I have suggested Lakewood, Asheville, and half a dozen other places which John has vetoed in turn. He cares very little for winter resorts. Hot Springs is the only one he ever thought beneficial, but of course Arkansas is out of the question."

"Not a bit of it. Now suppose you stop suggesting, and begin to order. Is the local doctor a diplomat?"

"He's as brusque as his name, which is Savage, but he is the friend of half the county."

"Just the person. Have him drop in this evening — socially, say — and bully the senator. When he prescribes Hot Springs, I'll stand ready to block all objections with a private car. Such luxuries come easily to us railroad men, you know."

The admiral's wife instantly seconded the plan. She had grown to like this man of quick decision and unbounded energy, who was so much bigger than he seemed.

"I can see why they let you manage campaigns," she laughed. "You never lack a plan."

"But it's the execution that counts. All rests with you and the savage doctor. You'd go along, wouldn't you?"

"If it seemed best."

"And do inveigle the admiral. He is sure death to the blues."

"I think it's as important to inveigle you. Do come."

He would have given more than he was prepared to say to Katherine's aunt for the privilege of sharing those intimate days. If it were but the niece who persuaded! If Katherine should persuade!

"If I see my way," he half promised.

A word, a look, would have attached him to the party, but while Katherine was prodigal of thanks for the stratagem to which Wentworth docilely yielded, neither word nor look was forthcoming, and the way he saw and followed was not hers.

His own path did not lack distractions. Maddox was restive; Redfern was exceeding busy. According to the *Mail*, the hour of a new era had struck. One-man power should henceforth

be a stranger to the organization of the party. Every man should have his chance. Time discovered that these sentiments had their specific bearing upon the election of a successor to Wentworth, whose broken health the *Mail* loudly deplored, and other newspapers about the state began to discuss. The echoes even penetrated Arkansas where a girl, already wracked by anxiety, read, believed, and uttered a cry of pain.

CHAPTER XIX

DREW consulted a railroad guide and set in motion certain machinery which traced the easterly progress of a private car designated "naught seven." He chose to read into Katherine's letter a personal summons, the word for which he had waited. To join her at Washington presented too tedious an alternative, and by dint of a hurried night journey he greeted the senator's party at breakfast just as their train left Ohio behind and sped forward into the gray morning which rose tardily over the Alleghanies.

Wentworth was bewildered by his sudden apparition.

"I had business in this direction," Drew explained, upon deciphering a warning look from Katherine. "The railroad people located you readily, and I simply stepped aboard when you came along. So much for the age of the telegraph! Admiral," turning to Austin, "how that one invention must have upset old traditions in your profession!"

The digression was brilliantly successful. Austin

threshed out the naval changes from Nelson to Farragut, and breakfast ran its orderly course from fruit to finger-bowls. The admiral's wife, however, had witnessed both signal and result. It was illuminating. Drew's fall from the clouds had been as startling to her as to her brother, for notwithstanding her alarm, Katherine had kept her own counsel. Breakfast over, she toled her husband after some obtuse resistance into a retired section of the car.

"Well," he queried lightly, "what enormity have I committed now?"

His wife enjoined solemnity, secrecy, and mystery with a single frown.

"That business excuse was rubbish!"

"Whose rubbish?" said the admiral, densely.

"His! Mr. Drew's! He's here for another reason."

"What of it? Men of his stamp don't placard all their motives."

"She sent for him!"

This needed no elucidation and the admiral grinned.

"Don't let your match-making propensity run away with you, Sue," he advised. "Of course I know your opinion of Drew's eligibility has changed since you crossed the ocean, but—"

His wife stopped his lips with a plump hand which the admiral gallantly kissed.

"Now don't blunder into a tête-à-tête," she charged.

"Oh, excuse me from the platform if it's to be an open-air tryst," he returned cheerfully. "It's too chilly for blood at merely normal temperature, and the scenery is an old story. Besides I've a sea yarn by a preposterous landlubber to finish, and —"

"You'll do nothing of the sort. When you catch my eye, you will ask John to play chess, and then you'll *play* chess till further orders."

Hence, with a facility, which if Drew remarked at all, he called good luck, came the opportunity for a talk apart with Katherine and the speedy dissolution of her doubts. No exile to the nipping climate of the platform such as the admiral crudely suggested was necessary. A kindly fate simply decreed that they should at a stroke find themselves in a virtual state of isolation. It is true that Wentworth and his brother-in-law poised rook and pawn within the same compartment, but the noise of the train divided them as effectually as if the interesting pair sat in West Virginia and their elders planned checkmates in Maryland.

The admiral was playing in Maryland in sober earnest before he obtained his secret signal of release. Mrs. Austin buttonholed him in a narrow corridor as the preparations for luncheon were afoot.

"Well," she said expectantly, "what do you think?"

"Humph," rejoined the sailor. "I think you're a goose."

Mrs. Austin ceased to sparkle.

"You mean they didn't — didn't seem to be — "

"Philandering?" growled the admiral. "I should say not. Talking tariff would be a safer guess."

"Perhaps you couldn't tell. Their way may be different from yours — ours!"

"Pish!"

"And I know she encouraged him to come."

"Bosh!"

But in her heart Mrs. Austin knew that the admiral might be safely trusted to know philandering under any guise, and the prosaic behavior of Katherine and Drew at luncheon only added unnecessary emphasis. She was visibly more cheerful for his coming, but by no stretch of the imagination could their manner be thought lover-

like. She consoled herself, however, that Drew's company had leavened the whole party with good cheer, and she bade him note that Wentworth himself was spurred to evanescent fits of liveliness. The journey had apparently served its end. Barring an indifference to common impressions, he seemed to Drew his usual self. The wound was healing; time, philosophy, and the senatorial routine would cure.

Though cool till the sun cleared the mountains, the day warmed to an almost summer mellowness, and the still abundant foliage cloaking the more sheltered places of the heights they now threaded seemed in league with the balmy air to cheat the calendar. The summit attained, the long vestibuled train began a frantic measuring off of miles, the wheels ticking over the rail-joints like crickets gone mad; dell, dingle, and cascading brook fused together as in a panorama whose colors have run. The admiral made a shift to time the engineer, counting telegraph poles, watch in hand.

"How many knots?" laughed Katherine.

"I haven't complete confidence in the log. By my last count we were running no less than two hundred miles an hour, which I must say seems extreme."

"The old story: a sailor ashore," jeered his wife. "Mr. Drew, you keep time. I'll count."

The strident brakes, suddenly applied, broke off the experiment. The heavy train jarred to a standstill. Wentworth, changing color, started from his chair; then sank back with shortened breath. Katherine was instantly hanging over him.

"Don't be a ninny," reproved her aunt, sharply. "If your father were really ill, you would kill him with kindness."

Wentworth's hand sought Katherine's.

"Sue is right about me, my dear," he said. "Nothing is wrong."

Drew reconnoitred from a window. They had halted on a long curve and he saw their detached engine give a preliminary cough, slip down the grade, and vanish round the shoulder of a wooded bluff. Silent hills, the outposts of distant mountains, hemmed them about, and a small stream gurgled over its pebbles just below. The conjectures of the passengers struck an intrusive, untoward note in the wildness.

"Track blocked by a freight wreck just around the curve," announced the admiral, returning from a journey of exploration in the Pullman ahead. "No lives lost, but they say the land-

scape is littered with Milwaukee beer and Chicago beef. Does anybody want to foot it down the ties and have a look?"

Everybody did. Drew found himself well in the van with Mrs. Austin, Katherine, convoyed by Wentworth and the admiral, following at slower pace. The whole train-load was streaming forth prepared to make a picnic of necessity. The railroad men themselves took the disaster in a spirit of jocosity. Coming upon the scene as the wrecking train arrived from the east, Drew witnessed the laconic meeting of the engineers.

"This th' best you c'n do?" said the wrecker, shifting his quid.

The wrecked deliberately wiped his hands on a bit of cotton waste. "We've tied traffic both ways," he drawled.

They critically surveyed a black and yellow refrigerator car whose shattered forward truck had wrought the mischief. Ploughing the ties for a hundred yards, it had ended its insane rush with a last fling of evil energy that wrecked its immediate fellows; its nearest rear neighbor lay like a reversed tumble-bug twenty feet down the slope; the offender itself had slouched drunkenly down between the rails with its projecting eaves disputing the east-bound right of way.

"By half a foot," estimated the custodian of the quid.

"Yes; six or seven inches. Say half a foot."

The pick and shovel brigade indulged in no such fine-drawn speculations. They were already baring of earth a long stretch of ties along the uninjured track. With his eager interest in life of every sort, Drew watched the foreman.

"There's gumption," he exclaimed. "A greenhorn would have frittered away the afternoon trying to jack up that disabled car. But do you see what he is doing? He means to shift our track over bodily and let us go round!"

Mrs. Austin with Drew's aid chose a rocky perch in the trees overlooking the scene. The others spied them, but lingered below. The girl seemed to have thrown off her recent anxiety and walked chatting between the men with buoyant step. Her aunt saw Drew's eyes quit the wreckers and follow her tenderly.

"I spoke sharply to Katherine in the car," she said on sudden impulse. "It seemed for her good no less than the senator's."

"I understood."

"They color one another's moods as if they were sweethearts."

Drew was soberly thoughtful.

"She told me at 'The Beeches' that her happiness depends on his," he said presently. "Her devotion is as rare as her nature."

"Katherine is a normal loving woman in an abnormal condition," amended Mrs. Austin. "The senator has stood to her as father and mother both with the nimbus of celebrity superadded. She has lavished upon one parent, whom she thinks a demigod, the affections which are ordinarily shared by two, and possibly brothers and sisters."

"If he should be taken —"

"Precisely. It is a contingency I often consider. Not that I think John in any danger. Far from it. He is spiritually adrift, because of Spedding, but he's physically hale. Look at him there! We Wentworths are of a long-lived stock. Nevertheless the possibility exists and for Katherine's good should be faced. She should marry."

She somehow seemed to expect a response, but Drew was dumb.

"Marry and live the life Nature meant her to live," Mrs. Austin continued, talking to an inscrutable profile. "Katherine does not lack opportunities."

She drew blood at that — as she meant — a hot flush that lingered in the man's cheek.

"I should suppose as much," he said, rather huskily. "So lovable — so fair."

"But cotillon leaders and fortune-hunting attachés aren't the Petruchios for our Katherine. She has all a normal woman's inclination to make some man the centre of the universe, but she has a predilection for brains. He must be older than she by some years; a man concerned in public affairs, for there her social gift is at its best; he should love her with all his strength, love her foibles even, because they are her foibles and dearer in his sight than another's virtues —"

Drew was round upon her before the end of the catalogue.

"How did you guess?" he stammered. "I thought —"

"You thought that you might always read others and nobody read you?" she laughed. "Love isn't politics."

"And you think me worthy?" It was stupendous that Mrs. Austin should be saying these things! "You think me worthy? You wish me well?"

"Yes, modest man."

"And she?"

"Must answer for herself, of course. I don't

think you need fear your rivals. Katherine has gone her way singularly heart-whole."

"There was Dick."

Mrs. Austin laughed.

"Katherine was never in love with Dick," she said. "She was merely in love — how did some clever person put what I mean? — with being in love."

CHAPTER XX

THE wrecking gang below crowbarred the track into its temporary road-bed, and the conductor warned his passengers back to their coaches. Wentworth and the others were already under way, and, helping Mrs. Austin down the rocks, Drew fell into a long, swinging stride, with his eyes upon Katherine, whose bright golf-cape he sighted up the straggling file.

"Is this mad rush necessary?" gasped his companion, trudging in a losing match. "We've distanced even the conductor."

Drew laughed, apologized, and slackened the pace, but remained untalkative, and Mrs. Austin let his prismatic meditations run uninterrupted. His morning with Katherine had been as unlover-like as the admiral surmised. Her fears tranquillized, the girl had rebounded to an almost hectic gayety which baffled him. He would almost have said that she talked to head off speech from him. But here was Katherine's own aunt come to fortify him against this feminine mystery.

When he detained her an instant at the car

step, Mrs. Austin perceived that she had had her part in his revery.

"You have done me a great service," he said; "a tremendous service."

"The event will show."

"In any event."

"Good luck!" she wished with a parting squeeze of the hand he had taken.

The admiral bolted out into the vestibule at this tender juncture.

"Sue," he called sharply, "Sue!"

For a droll instant his wife supposed him ruffled at her innocent platonics, but the thought endured for an instant only.

"The senator — doctor —" he ejaculated, and was off.

Luckily his quest ended with the Pullman adjoining, and he was at their heels with a physician almost as they entered. The doctor quietly took over Wentworth from Katherine's tremulous ministrations and excluded every one. Mrs. Austin promptly devoted herself to the frightened girl and somehow pieced together the facts. It appeared that in stooping to his shoelace Wentworth had had a rush of blood to the head.

"Oh, a mere nosebleed," said Mrs. Austin, with relief.

"A hemorrhage," quavered Katherine.

"Don't frighten yourself with big words. You'll find it amounts to nothing."

"But it does," the admiral told Drew, in a cautious undertone as the men got themselves out of the way. "It wasn't a matter of the nostrils only."

All were clustered in an anxious group when the doctor reappeared. He was a large man with kind eyes.

"The senator is very comfortable," he said, singling out Katherine for especial reassurance. "He protests that he feels as sound as a nut, and he undoubtedly does, but I have persuaded him to lie down for a while. Rest and a quiet mind are really the only prescription, and I recommend them to all of you."

"But the hemorrhage, doctor?" Katherine said.

"The nosebleed?" he returned simply. "It is common enough in high altitudes. But we are descending all the while now," he added, glancing out of a window. "Gentlemen, do you play whist? I can lay my hand on a fourth man if you'd care for a game."

Austin and Drew followed him into his own car with a clear understanding that whist would be far from their commerce.

"Doctor," said the admiral, promptly, "that *was* a hemorrhage?"

"Yes."

"And the altitude?"

"Mattered little. It was the stooping which interfered with the heart's action."

"It is the heart!"

"Yes. The disturbance is there—such as it is."

"And you think?"

"I advise you to consult the senator's regular medical attendant. It was for this I asked you aside. I thought possibly the ladies might borrow unnecessary trouble. The heart is a great bugaboo."

"But your own opinion, doctor?" pressed Drew, seeing more in the man's manner than he voiced.

"Oh, a rough guess merely, not worth the statement. My examination was hasty, you see. Your regular physician will go into it with all care and lay out the proper regimen — if a regimen is needful; I don't say it is. I'll give you my card — I am a Washingtonian myself — and if your physician cares to talk over to-day's attack, — as he may, — I shall be glad to meet him."

Drew and the admiral took counsel together before reëntering their car.

"Professional delicacy?" Drew queried.

"He knows more than he tells, I'll warrant."

"He wanted to avoid alarming us."

"Well, he alarmed me," declared Austin, studying the card. "'Bowman!' I've heard of him before, and favorably. He's one of *the* Bowmans — F.F.V. and all that — and considered a handy man at his trade. We'll take the senator directly to my house; no hotel for him to-night, or any night, till we've sounded this thing. In the morning I'll call Armstrong. He's dosed all of us for a decade. Better to-morrow than to-night, eh? We'll make Washington rather late."

"What shall you tell Mrs. Austin?"

"Nothing — at least till Armstrong has had his say. Sue's imagination will beat Katherine's hands down if you touch the right spring. There is no pessimist like a backsliding optimist."

After a sufficient interval they returned, feigning light-hearted relief. It was a clumsy dissembling, but happily they met an atmosphere charged with the genuine emotion, which Wentworth fostered by rejoining them in excellent spirits an hour before the train reached Washington. He was eager to resume work, and was with difficulty brought round to share the Austins' roof for a night.

"We'll have a hearth of our own presently," he said. "I'm only waiting until the succession is definitely settled."

"But that is a foregone conclusion, father," returned Katherine, quickly, her look confidently searching Drew, who nodded. "I mean to begin house-hunting at once."

"Come neighbor us," suggested the admiral, abetting their trusting reliance upon a rickety future. "Barring the bronze general shaking his sword at the sparrows, there's nothing strenuous about our square. That's why we chose it. It's a city home with country comforts."

Drew declined Mrs. Austin's hospitality, rather to her mystification. He promised a call on the morrow, however, and privately arranged an earlier meeting with the admiral to follow the doctor's examination.

The forenoon brought Austin as agreed, but no respite from suspense.

"I had a time of it over calling Armstrong," he announced, "for John looks the pink of health. However, I convinced Katherine, and she of course persuaded him that it was common sense."

"And Armstrong?"

"Armstrong thumped him over in a casual sort of way, seconded Bowman's bluff about the

altitude, — I had him primed with all the facts, — and made some suggestions about taking things quietly for a few days. He spent more time in talking about Bowman. Said he was a jolly companion when you came to know him, a crack whist player, and so on. The senator pricked up his ears at whist, — it's his one frivolity, you know, — and Armstrong undertook to bring his friend around to-night."

"It's their way of getting together to watch him!"

"He admitted as much when I cornered him, but cautioned me against letting it leak out in the household. I think he even told a few white lies to quiet me. But he didn't disguise the fact that it's a mighty serious matter."

The vagueness of the impending evil heightened its menace. Drew's imagination shot ahead to its possible consequences — a sombre train. Then he harked swiftly back to the sufficient anxiety of the hour.

"Is there no way I can help?" he asked.

"Well, yes," Austin hesitated. "You may play fourth at whist."

Drew smothered an exclamation.

"It's ghastly, I know," the admiral added, "but I'd hate to have either of the women play,

— their intuitions are too keen; and as for myself I hardly know a jack from a king, and to pretend a sudden interest may lead Sue to suspect something. We must keep the womenfolk cheery at any cost. They're the weathermakers of the home."

The physicians contributed no obvious grimness. Armstrong's morning call had lulled Katherine's fears; Mrs. Austin had expressed none; and Wentworth looked almost his usual self. Indeed, there were moments when even Drew forgot the visitors' real errand, so social the hour. For tobacco's sake they played in a room apart from Mrs. Austin and Katherine, or at least that was the admiral's explanation to which one and another lent plausibility by letting a cigar smoulder. Yet there was nothing bogus about the whist. Bowman carried out his reputation as an expert to rigorous ends, but if his silence during the progress of a game was austere, his geniality over the dealing was no less marked. It was during one of these latter intervals that by skilful approaches he led Wentworth on to rehearse the story of his attack in detail.

There was no forgetting after that. The game seemed a hideous gamble with fate. Wentworth, unsuspecting, enjoyed himself after his pacific

fashion, and, as always under friendly stimulus, flowered reminiscence. Drew had seldom seen his elemental physical charm more potent, and marked with repressed feeling how it wove its spell even upon these emotion-armored men of science. It was a strange evening, made not less strange at parting by the senator's expressed hope for many such to come.

"It is like shaking hands with your hangman," muttered Austin, as Drew also prepared to go. "You'll not return to New York until—"

"We know the unvarnished truth? No."

The revelation came swiftly. Meeting Austin in the morning, Drew learned that the immediate upshot of last night's sinister game was a telegram to an eminent Philadelphia specialist who was expected to arrive in Washington by noon.

"Armstrong is to 'phone, asking if he may bring a distinguished friend to luncheon," the admiral explained.

"The senator may begin to suspect."

"Not he! It's Sue who'll wonder."

Indoors and out, Drew tramped off five anxious hours. At three o'clock, no word coming, he started for Austin's residence, and so ran upon the admiral himself homing from another direc-

tion. The very droop of his shoulders stamped him as the carrier of bad news.

"They've come and gone," he said mechanically. "I went over to Armstrong's afterwards. I've just come from there. It's an organic valvular lesion of the heart."

"Organic valvular lesion!" Drew mouthed the unfamiliar doctor's terminology after him. "That means that something has given way — gone wrong?"

"Fatally wrong in poor Wentworth's case."

"Not that! They don't say that?"

"Our doctors hesitated to say it, so the specialist came."

"There are other heart specialists!"

"This man leads them."

CHAPTER XXI

THEY silently faced the fact in its naked ugliness."

"How long?" asked Drew, thickly.

"There is no predicting. What they can do to prolong life will be done."

"And he! Is he to know?"

"He must know nothing. Strong mental excitement would probably be fatal. It must be *our* secret."

"Poor Katherine!" groaned Drew. "Poor Katherine!"

"I thought those doctors clever actors," Austin ruminated gloomily. "The great physicians must be actors too, I dare say. But what are their few hours beside our days, weeks — months!"

"Years, God willing," said Drew, rousing. "Let's hope the doctors blockheads, and wish the senator another decade."

"Your acting has already begun! It's time for mine. Come; we'll go in."

But even at the threshold their dissembling

fell to pieces. Mrs. Austin had marked their coming, and, herself opening the door to them, marched them like culprits into the library.

"You are keeping something from me," she accused. "It is something dreadful, something I ought to know. Don't try to put me off," she went on, riddling their shuffling protests with a glance. "I have suspected you ever since Dr. Armstrong said he would bring Dr. Bowman for whist. Dr. Armstrong hasn't time for whist! And he hasn't time for mere luncheons! And his friend's coming to-day wasn't by chance! That man's name and specialty are known everywhere. It's John they came to watch! You cannot deceive me. Why have you tried to keep this terrible thing from me?"

Then Austin told her, adding:—

"I'd have spoken at the outset, Sue dear, if I had had the say of it. The fewer the better, they thought. We're to keep this a cheery home — God save us!"

His wife was crying softly.

"I'll — I'll be cheery," she sobbed.

"Not that way, Sue," begged Austin, dolefully; "not that way! If poor Katherine should see you — hear you! *She* mustn't know."

Drew had turned away. A near portière

swayed strangely before his blurred eyes. He distinguished a labored sigh which quavered to a moan. The fabric parted uncertainly. A slender figure swayed bewildered in the opening.

"Katherine!" they chorused at her, blankly.

"I heard," she said, with an unnatural composure. "I heard all."

The men effaced themselves and helplessly prowled the smoking-room for an interminable half hour. Then came Mrs. Austin, seeking Drew.

"Katherine asks for you," she said.

"For me!"

"She turns to you."

He found her waiting rigidly in the darkening room, her face spectral in its whiteness. When she spoke, it was as if a marble found voice.

"You will help," she appealed.

"Katherine!"

Her sombre eyes seemed to look through and beyond him.

"He must suspect nothing — nothing. That is our great task, our duty."

"Our privilege," Drew said gently.

"His precious life hangs upon our vigilance," she went on. "If we tide him over these first weeks, the weakness may pass, the tissues build. Who knows!"

"Ay, who knows!" echoed Drew, instantly bolstering the puny hope. "People make a bugaboo of the heart, Bowman says," he quoted. "Why should the doctors themselves be immune?"

If she took comfort from what he mentally spurned, she gave no sign. Her tense, still suffering lay too deep for surface ripples.

"We must plan to shield him," she said with her heartbreaking calm. "When Congress meets, he must be found in his seat."

"Of course."

"And everything will go on as before."

"If possible."

"It must be made possible."

"Yes," he soothed. "Yes."

"Promise!"

"Promise what, Katherine?"

"That there shall be no change."

While he considered how he might pacify her best, she swept on:—

"Promise that you will let no man come between him and his reëlection because of this! I ask his life of you, nothing less."

"Trust me in this, Katherine. The future shall guide."

"Promise!"

"It is not a thing for promises. Trust me, Katherine. I love your father."

"Is this your help?"

"Be generous!"

She met his entreaty stonily; then suddenly veered to a contrition he found harder yet to bear.

"Forgive me," she begged. "I — I am overwrought."

"And I am a tactless blunderer!" Drew exclaimed in self-scorn.

With a resolute effort for self-control she began quietly to discuss their wisest course. Mrs. Austin soon joined them, as later did the admiral. Finally came Wentworth himself, just awakened from a nap, and put them to the test. They talked like creatures moving in a dream, smiling outwardly, their hearts crucified. At dinner there even flickered a phantom laughter. Yet later came other human things: cigars, fireside chat, and music.

The last was at Wentworth's particular solicitation. He had a simple, old-fashioned taste in such matters, which embraced nothing more recent than "The Battle of Prague," and delighted most in plaintive Scotch and Irish melodies. He hit now, however, upon Mendelssohn as Katherine lingered in the doorway for his

bidding, and out to him who touched fingers with winter and death lilted presently the very essence of life and love's springtime.

Yet it was Katherine rather than Wentworth who at that moment filled their thoughts.

"It is for her I am afraid," her aunt murmured at Drew's side. "Not a note at fault!"

Without replying, Drew rose and crossed the intervening hall to the dim-lit music room where, with eyes closed and lashes wet, the girl sat rigidly before the instrument. Then the flood-tide of his love and compassion whelmed its last barrier. Who should cherish if not he? As the last note melted into silence he took the player unresisting in his arms. So in the obscurity they stood. From beyond Wentworth called his thanks; his sister's voice succeeded; then the admiral's. The chess-board came forward and the senator began marshalling the white and red hosts over against each other. The absentees were unheeded.

"You shall not drink this cup of bitterness alone," Drew said. "By right of a great love I claim a part."

Katherine gave no answer. He felt no omission. For the time it was to him all sufficient that his caress went unrepulsed. It was a moment

crowded with ineffable meanings for him. He divined that it could signify no less for her. While life endured this bitter-sweet memory would remain ineffaceable. With what associations, poor bungler, had he linked these maiden mysteries which should have known no shadow!

"Have I wronged you by speaking now?" he asked. "I have waited long. I could have waited longer but for the sight of your misery. I thought — if you knew — you might trust me more than you seemed to trust me a little time ago. Your happiness is mine, dear heart. Your grief is mine also."

"Give us your opinion here, my girl," called Wentworth.

"Coming, father."

Drew released her. For an instant she remained close beside him. Her face was averted. He could not have read it in the thick shadows if he would.

"Is it well with us, Katherine?" he demanded, with sudden misgiving. "Have I dared too much?"

She silently gave him her hand. It was cold to the touch, and he thought of the hand which met his under the capsized sail. This was their betrothal.

The flags flew from either wing of the Capitol on the morrow and Drew and Katherine drove over through the crisp air with Wentworth, and from the members' gallery of the Senate overlooked the opening of the session. The desks of many senators bore flowers, costly blooms of the forcing-house. Wentworth's was wholly lost to sight beneath a scented drift of roses, for his passion for them was widely known. They banked even the leather-seated chair, overflowed to the very waste-basket, and trailed their ribbons in the aisle.

Katherine smothered a little cry.

"How could I forget?" she said. "I sent him nothing!"

"He will not notice," Drew consoled. "See! it is the flowers, not the cards."

Wentworth bent over his treasures as they looked, singled out the choicest with an expert's swift judgment, and snapped his fingers for a page. A moment later the pink-petaled shower of fragrance lay in Katherine's lap.

"There was a card here," she said, lifting her face from their loveliness.

Drew searched impossible corners.

"Are you sure?" he asked. "The page may have dropped it."

"You are stepping on it."

The man bent with deepened color.

"I don't see it," he protested.

With a quick movement she stooped also. Drew's eyes were tightly shut.

"You are a dear humbug," she whispered. "Give me your card."

The Vice President opportunely let his gavel fall, the senators got upon their feet, the chaplain besought wisdom for those in high places, and the session's routine began. Wentworth had given his reluctant word that his first day's work should be light, and the three went shortly out together into the bracing air and brilliant sunshine which beat upon the great east front.

"It's absurd to run away from school like this," the senator protested as they came slowly down the steps to the carriage. "I'm fit for a mountain of work and should have made no promises."

His lethargy for the hour cast off, he looked and felt a sound man, and even imposed his optimism upon the others. As they drove home by a roundabout course they balanced the pros and cons suggested by rentable houses here and there, and speculated upon the winter's gayeties. To Katherine, willing dupe of this mirage, the

last three days seemed as unsubstantial as a troubled dream, last night a tissue of shadowy unreality. It was such a mood she turned presently to Drew.

"I leave the house in an hour," he said, when they were again alone. "The President has asked me to call this afternoon, and from the White House I must go directly to my train."

"Home?"

"I once called it so. Where you are signifies home now."

He waited for a response and vainly.

"But New York is the workshop still," he went on, "and if I am to help, it must be there, not here."

"You have been everything to us."

There was an interval of silence which Drew was the first to break.

"Katherine," he said, "I cannot go without speaking to your father of what has passed between us."

"No, no!" The protest was vehement.

"No, Katherine?"

The pain in his voice drew her round to face him.

"Have I hurt you?" she faltered. "I did not mean — it is of him we must think first.

Why speak to-day? He is stronger, better. Do nothing to excite him — to hinder his recovery — "

"I had hoped it would make him happier to know."

"It would, Philip, it would. He loves you as a son."

"Then he will take no harm from knowing."

"Later," she pleaded. "Later."

She sank upon a low seat, looking at him no longer. She could not tell this loyal, unselfish, true-hearted man that in the strange dream-existence of yesterday she had done him a wrong. His very unselfishness had hurried her farther than her heart prompted. His heart had been an open page to her for many a day, but she could not read her own aright. She admired Drew, admired him as she had no man save her father. She had felt the still force of his character at the outset of their acquaintance; his mind had called to her mind with a sure appeal as their friendship grew; and the hour when she first realized that this master of men loved her was one of triumph. She had thought she would know her own heart when the time came for him to speak, but the time had come, and she had not known. Neither did she know now as he stood bewildered over her.

"Would you wait till too late?" he asked gravely. "You say this would make him happy. Could you forgive yourself if he—"

"Don't," she implored, starting up; "don't speak of that! You shall not speak of that!"

She moved irresolutely down the room. Drew watched her in sheer perplexity. He could read men: women were expressed in cryptic characters, this woman whom he strove painfully to know being the most incomprehensible of all. He could see only her pure profile, but its lines seemed to him to model themselves into a tragic mask, and after a wretched moment he followed her.

"Let it be as you say," he yielded. "Who am I to judge!"

Katherine spun round as if it had needed but that.

"No; let it be as you say," she answered. "It is I who am unreasonable. He is in the library. Go to him now. It is his due."

"Not against your wish."

She stooped to his hand and kissed it.

"You should have loved a better woman, Philip Drew," she said. "Go tell him. I bid you go."

CHAPTER XXII

At the week's end, Maddox made a contribution to the situation. His rencounter with Drew fell out from a joint-meeting with the governor-elect. The manner of their coming together was significant. The initiative was Scott's, who asked for an informal talk preliminary to the regular gathering of state leaders on the eve of the legislative session. Drew responded with an invitation to luncheon at his hotel. Maddox interposed a previous engagement and suggested a little dinner at his club. Scott thought the time ripe for finesse.

"You see, my dear," he told his wife from an uneasy pillow, "I owe my nomination mainly to Drew. On the other hand Maddox gave me a rousing plurality below the Bronx. If they are going to lock horns over the state leadership, as a good many people think, I've a pretty ticklish course to steer."

"I should think that you would be state leader," returned his lady, who was absorbed in

the gown problem presented by her first New Year reception in the Executive Mansion. "I should think that the head of the state would naturally be the head of his party too."

The governor-elect hemmed dryly.

"It doesn't seem to work out that way," he answered. "But what am I to do about this luncheon-dinner business, I'd like to know?"

"Give a luncheon or a dinner of your own," said his wife, practically. "Or a breakfast, rather, which is less common."

Her husband embraced the suggestion, and to his vast relief the meeting which took place at his brother's city residence was altogether harmonious. Neither leader had aught but praise for the rough draft of his maiden message which he laid deferentially before them; his suggestions with regard to appointments aroused only the friendliest discussion, and they were seemingly of a mind about the legislative programme. No one mentioned the senatorship directly, though Scott alluded once to the newspaper accounts of Wentworth's ill-health which had somehow gained currency within the last day or two.

"The old man deserves a rest," observed Maddox, demurely.

Thin ice threatened here and the diplomat

reverted nimbly to his message. A little later he heaved a sigh of satisfaction to see his guests pass down the street together, apparently engrossed with one another's society.

Engrossed they indubitably were. Maddox's first words had riveted Drew's attention.

"I want to say some things it wasn't necessary to publish to Scott," he remarked. "Pressed for time?"

"Not particularly."

"Then suppose we walk down town."

They forthwith crossed to Fifth Avenue, traversing a chaotic side street whose nearer curb for the space of a block was lined with a paving gang of perhaps half a hundred men. They were of mixed nationality — Italians, Slavs, Poles, and yet other peoples bullied by an Irish foreman. Yet at Maddox's approach this polyglot assemblage, seemingly the raw unleavened dough of citizenship, betrayed the inworking presence of some quickening germ. One laborer nudged another, tugging meanwhile at his cap; the second ducked and bespoke a third, who in turn hailed his neighbor. So down the ranks went word of the approach of the unofficial ruler of no mean city. To Drew this chance tribute of the proletariat — this significant hand-

ful out of thousands — came as a revelation of personal power almost passing credence, and he wondered what thoughts it stirred in the man beside him. But for a spark in his eye as he returned his greetings with a half-military salute, Maddox seemed to move through it all as one to whom custom had staled the homage.

Neither man spoke till they turned down the avenue. Then, without preface or warning, Maddox bluntly asked: —

"Between you and me, why shouldn't old Wentworth step down? He's out of date."

Drew gathered himself in hand for he knew not what.

"A majority of the new Legislature is of another opinion," he said.

"Spedding's dead," observed Maddox, sententiously.

"Good faith isn't, I trust."

"No. I trust not too," Maddox agreed in all seriousness. "I don't know what party organization would amount to if it was. I say to the boys, Keep your word if you can't keep anything else. But I haven't noticed Common Sense mentioned in the obituaries either."

"Do you propose to raise this issue in the caucus?" Drew asked after a pause.

"No, sir," rejoined Maddox, promptly. "New York's bundle of votes will be regularly delivered, never fear. I never broke an agreement with Spedding nor with any other man."

Drew knew him for a man of his word and said so, heartily.

"All the same I shouldn't object if Wentworth would let us off," Maddox resumed. "He is entitled to reëlection, of course, if he is of a mind to stand upon his rights. What I claim is that he shouldn't press his technical rights. Suppose he should drop off some time when the Legislature is close or against us altogether. I maintain that he owes it to the party to let some younger man take his place."

With his dread knowledge, Drew could make no direct answer, but he asked: —

"Your own choice is still Redfern?"

"No," said Maddox, with deliberation. "I am not committed in that quarter. It's true I like Redfern, and that I think as senator he'd fill the bill with credit to the state, but it isn't Redfern I have in mind just now. It's yourself."

Such a suggestion from such a source staggered Drew.

"But I don't want it," he protested. "I've never entertained the thought."

"I was afraid so," rejoined Maddox, with regret. "I was afraid so. If you only did want it, all would be plain sailing. Wentworth would make way for you at a word."

"Nothing could induce me to become a party to such a scheme."

Maddox laughed softly.

"No occasion for heat," he said. "I admire your thick and thin loyalty if I don't understand it. To me Wentworth has always seemed rather a chilly proposition."

As he spoke he stooped to pick up a toy which a baby in a perambulator had suddenly flung at his feet, and as he bent his rough-hewn face to the child's, and was by some freemasonry of infancy hailed instantly for a friend, he seemed a very human Maddox indeed. Drew had a fleeting impulse to be frank with him. Why should he pretend to lofty motives when his compelling force was what it was? There was no hoodwinking of self in the equivocal course on which he saw himself embarked. It was neither state, nor party, nor Wentworth, but Love which had his first allegiance. Katherine had left him free, as he petitioned, and in the loosing, bound him.

Then Maddox lifted his head. The kindly light that had played from his eyes to the

cherub's vanished. He presented again the baffling mask of the man whom the superior classes abhorred and the masses adored. Arch-criminal of a colossal band of freebooters, or benign high priest of an attempt at human brotherhood no less vast, these were his Janus faces! Which was his true presentment? Or, if neither wholly, what part of each? To evoke the popular dilemma was to nip confidence. They walked on in a long silence which Maddox broke at last, only to speak of indifferent topics till each went his reticent way.

Drew was disturbed by the interview. That Maddox would swing his disciplined forces into line for Wentworth at the legislative caucus if Wentworth should continue in the field, admitted of no doubt. But meanwhile was Maddox to be trusted not to manœuvre for Wentworth's elimination? Between mid-December and mid-January lay opportunities for mischief galore. To this anxiety was added, with the adjournment of Congress for the holidays, the further complication of Wentworth's presence in the city. Katherine was able to give but the briefest notice of their coming, reserving explanations till she should arrive.

"This is madness," Drew told her, when they got speech together.

"He would have it so."

"He should have been dissuaded."

"We tried our utmost, but we dared not cross him. He insists that it is only fitting he should be near at hand when the Legislature acts."

"But Armstrong! What was the man about?"

"He thought that to consent might do less harm than to forbid. Don't blame him, Philip. He has been all kindness. He has even offered to follow us here should it seem best."

"He could not appreciate the risk. He could not guess —"

"Guess!" Her tired eyes dilated at his tone. "Guess what? Is there some new trouble?"

Drew mastered himself. He must not add Maddox to her anxieties.

"We cannot shield him here as in Washington," he said hastily. "He is a great public character, ever under the searchlight of the press. There has been chatter as it is — comment upon his apathy in the Senate."

They stood in a window overlooking Madison Square, whose clangor penetrated even the heavy panes. All the city's arteries seemed to centre here. Here seemed to beat the civic heart.

"We must go to another hotel," she said. "It

must be some quiet place — less public, less dangerous."

But Wentworth balked with gentle obstinacy the attempt to alter the habit of a lifetime. He protested that it was not noisy — for New York; that he had not come for pastoral quiet, but to meet the world; that, so situated, people whom he wanted to see would pass his way and so save him steps for which he felt little inclination. Finally, and he presented it as his reason in chief, he pointed out that he would be directly upon the ground for the coming conference of the state leaders.

"I have been remiss in the past," he told Drew, serenely. "I am sensible that I left too much upon poor Spedding's shoulders. I must not so overburden you."

Drew was at his wits' end. Wentworth seemed bent upon his own undoing, howsoever they might plan. The admiral was a listener, and when the opportunity offered, he took Drew aside to say that he surmised that he was contending with more than he disclosed.

"I'm as little of a politician as any man alive," he said, "but if it will ease your load, I'll lend a hand."

Drew thanked him with a look.

"It is politics I would put away from him, admiral," he returned. "Tole him from this place somehow when I can't stand guard."

It was a measure of despair, but Austin lent himself to it without question, and for the better part of a week they maintained an alternating watch. The senator was fond of the theatre, and Katherine sat with him through comedy which was tragedy, and through tragedy which was comic beside the gnawing misery within. There were certain other hours which Harriet and Dick, who were gift-buying in company, helped to fill. They were unselfish, as lovers go, and, knowing nothing of the shadow overhanging every one else, radiated light-heartedness.

"Hear ye! Hear ye! I've actually prevailed upon Harriet to name the day," Dick promptly announced, with the air of one who had taken a city. "I wanted to launch the matrimonial boat on January first, but Harriet—"

"Harriet didn't choose to be taken up like a New Year resolution," completed the bride-elect with spirit. "After Lent is quite soon enough, when you once consider everything that's to be done—"

"So I stipulated high noon Easter Monday," laughed Dick; "the earliest minute after Lent

possible. If you're not there on the dot, you'll miss the ceremony."

"But that college settlement, Miss Harriet?" rallied Wentworth, who took an amused interest in their badinage. "What will become of that?"

"Senator!" Dick's solemnity was prodigious. "If you knew the pains I've been to in order to hurdle that obstacle, you would let sleeping dogs lie. In the end I only won her over by proving with a kodak that even Two Rivers isn't wholly sanitary, prosperous, and of good report. Why, for a honeymoon treat I'll undertake to show her a corner in our factory district that needs a bath as much as any spot below Fourteenth Street you can specify. If that isn't an inducement, I don't know one."

Of his own motion Wentworth now took occasion to let them know how matters stood between Katherine and Drew, and amid the jubilant antiphony sung by Harris and his fiancée, missed the fact transparent to her lover that Katherine was battling for the whip-hand of emotions almost beyond control. Abetted by Mrs. Austin, who saw without understanding, Drew therefore contrived to postpone the interchange of girlish confidences for which Harriet was obviously

eager, and somehow shunted Dick, still bubbling congratulations, out of hearing.

An urgent business appointment took Drew into the lower city, and it was past his usual dinner hour when he reëntered the hotel lobby and, to his concern, saw Wentworth the centre of a little knot of notables and habitués of the corridors, of whom Maddox was one. Austin came a little way to meet him.

"It's been but a moment," he explained hastily. "I hadn't the heart to interfere. He's enjoying it so!"

Drew nodded reassuringly. After all it was hardly the time or place to fear mischief from Maddox.

"The old corner has a gathering worthy of its reputation to-night," he said.

It was a famous spot. For years these benches had been the lounging-place of celebrity. They constituted a kind of exchange for anecdote and wit, not unlike the coffee-house of an earlier century. It happened that the present tenants of the "Corner" were each in some respect noteworthy. Besides Wentworth, Maddox, and the admiral, the group could boast a war hero and a great editor, and the fringe of nobodies surrounding the somebodies seemed to attest that

the talk was thought not below the standard of tradition.

"Clay smiled at that," — it was the mellow flow of Wentworth's reminiscence Drew caught as he neared the company, — "and, gentlemen, I wish I had power to convey to you something of the magic of Clay's smile. It won you like sunlight routing a May-day shower. Webster's was different — the momentary rift in a thunder-head. You might admire Webster; you loved Harry Clay. But at this rate I shan't finish my story."

Then, as the bystanders parted for Drew, Wentworth made the younger man welcome with a smile scarcely less winning than the one of his describing. He looked rather paler than his wont.

"Don't let me interrupt you, sir," Drew said.

Wentworth smiled still and gazed fixedly before him. His auditors wondered a little at his prolonged silence, but most thought him groping in the rich storehouse of his memory for some fugitive detail. Suddenly Maddox, who sat nearest, darted forward and braced the swaying form.

"The man is sick!" he exclaimed.

There was a commotion in the corner. Then the house physician shouldered through and took charge. Drew and the admiral were at either hand. Austin's glance met Drew's.

CHAPTER XXIII

THEY buried Wentworth near "The Beeches," and his world paused briefly to do him honor. The President wrote Katherine a letter which lay hours in her lap unopened; the dead statesman's fellow-senators murmured idle condolences to which her ears were stopped; the eulogies of the press went unread. She moved through all that must be, enveloped in a vague benumbing haze, which had fallen with the final blow.

In the beginning this inertia had seemed to those about her a healing thing, but its persistence stirred alarm. Mrs. Austin advocated plain speaking.

"She owes it to herself to rouse. She owes it to you, Philip. I shall tell her so."

"I beg that you will not mention my name," he returned quickly. "I can wait."

When Katherine's awakening came, — and it followed swiftly, — it was from without. After the funeral Austin placed a recent will in Drew's hands with the surprising announcement that they two had been named as its executors. Drew

immediately arranged for the presence of the attesting witnesses and explained to Katherine the necessity for her brief appearance before the surrogate, to which she gave a mechanical assent and as mechanically performed.

As the early dusk closed in they sat sadly grouped in the railroad station of the county-seat, awaiting the tardy coming of their return train. It was the typical country waiting-room of the well-nigh typical steam railroad — the frugal corporation whose directorate swells the luxuries of patrons who may pick and choose by filching comforts from those who patronize because they must. The supreme sop cast by this parsimony in the direction of the unessential took the form of cuspidors of which these dreary watchers now confronted no less than three, earthen, titanic, superfluous. When this prospect palled, there remained sundry time-tables tacked against grimy plastering, and the pot-bellied stove, which, though it glowed like a burning world, merely vitiated the atmosphere without tempering the raw drafts from loose-hung door and sagging sash that swept the frigid zone appointed to the seats. Huddled in his coat-collar, the admiral exchanged an occasional word with his wife or Drew who answered in monosyllables. All three maintained

a furtive watch upon Katherine, who, with eyes closed beneath her shrouding crape, sat motionless.

The brief halt of a main-line express heartened them a little. Austin fared forth in search of a train-boy with New York papers, returning presently with a handful of the evening editions which he vainly urged upon the others. His own reading was brief. He had scarcely adjusted his glasses before he uttered a cry of amazement.

"Philip," he besought, "read this!"

Drew devoured the indicated headlines and whitened as he read. The admiral sought an explanation in his face and met a bewilderment as ingenuous as his own. With the common impulse of warding a blow from Katherine, both turned. Austin's cry had roused her, and she was facing them inquiringly. As they hesitated she threw back her heavy veil.

"There can be nothing worse than I already know," she said steadily. "What is it?"

"A contemptible piece of treachery!" Drew exclaimed. "The governor—" He choked in his great anger and broke off: "Here! Read for yourself, Katherine."

She read and then read the staring capitals again as if they conveyed no intelligible meaning. It was her aunt, reading with her, who gave them voice.

"Redfern!" she exclaimed. "The governor has put Redfern in my brother's place! But Philip! it is legislatures, not governors, that make senators!"

"He has power to fill a vacancy if the Legislature is not in session."

"But the Legislature will meet in a day or two, a week at utmost. Hasn't he created the senator of a week?"

"A senator without a seat," added the admiral. "Congress is not in session."

A passionate gesture of Katherine's cut them short. Every vestige of color had forsaken her face, but the look she bent upon Drew burnt its way to his heart.

"Is this your leadership?" she asked.

He recoiled as from a stinging physical blow, but he forbore to answer her. He could sound the depths of her bitter anger but too accurately. Time might convince her of his personal blamelessness. It was not for him to intrude his exculpation. But Mrs. Austin would not passively suffer this injustice.

"Shame upon you, Katherine!" she rebuked. "Can you forget what he has been to us? Do you appreciate his unselfish service of months? Has he been thinking of politics in these last days?"

The girl seemed not to hear.

"That man! That man of all men to succeed him," she kept repeating. "That marplot against my noble father's peace!"

She left them abruptly and went to the barren room's far end where she stood long gazing out into the night. The last loafer had deserted the station. Save a man in a green eye-shade, who stooped continually above a clicking telegraph instrument in the ticket-agent's little cell, they were again sole tenants.

"She will be just, in time, poor girl," said Austin. "Philip, what does this trickery of the governor's mean?"

"I can only guess like yourself."

"At least you guess in a field you know."

"Know!" Drew echoed bitterly. "Katherine has commented trenchantly upon the scope of my knowledge." After a moment he said more calmly: "The governor is a friend of Redfern's, and did him a supposed service. The move was probably meant to give him a greater prestige when the Legislature comes to fill this seat for which he has long been an avowed candidate."

"And will it?"

Drew shrugged, but his jaw set significantly, and Austin felt that a verbal reply would be

superfluous. Indeed, he watched him walk slowly down the room to Katherine, with a welling confidence that all would yet end as it should.

"If this Redfern appointment doesn't prove a boomerang, Sue," he said, "then I don't know Philip Drew."

His wife's anxious eyes were intent upon the meeting down the room.

"I wish I knew Katherine," she answered irrelevantly.

If the girl heeded Drew's approach, she gave him no hint of it.

"Katherine," he said, "I shall not return to 'The Beeches' to-night."

She faced about at his words. Her veil was still thrown back, and he plumbed the full unreasoning depths of her condemnation. When she spoke, it was with the metallic staccato of intense mental strain.

"You are going back to New York?"

"Yes."

"To fight?"

"Yes, Katherine."

She looked him long and narrowly in the eyes, sounding his utmost resolution. Drew forgot his own hurt to pity hers.

"To fight hard?"

"Need you ask that?"

"I do ask it."

"To fight hard," he asseverated.

Again the steadfast probing look. Then, as if she found him lukewarm in his championship, she added suddenly: —

"As if I were in the scale? No; not 'if,'" she flashed as his expression altered; "not if. I shall be."

He was fiery enough now.

"No, Katherine," he protested. "No, I say."

"I say yes. My father made you the executor of his estate. I charge you with the safekeeping of his memory. If you reverenced him, — if you love me, — you will not see him dishonored by such a successor."

The man's self-control gave way. Anger conquered anxiety.

"Can you think me indifferent to this insult of the governor's?" he demanded hotly. "Do I love James Redfern so much that I will tamely acquiesce? Do I need your rowelling to make me work to purge my leadership from contempt? Be reasonable, Katherine, be kind. Don't, don't, I implore you, put our happiness in jeopardy."

"My happiness is in jeopardy. It lies with you to save it — with you alone."

In the outer night the whistle of the dilatory accommodation hooted down the wind. As the building quaked and jarred to the oncoming train Drew's hand shut upon Katherine's wrist in an iron grip.

"You shan't slip from me, Katherine," he exclaimed hoarsely. "You shan't, by heaven, you shan't! I'll crush that man who has made you unhappy. His defeat shall be a bitter morsel — the bitterest he can know. He shall see me take the senatorship — *me*, Katherine, whom he hates — hates as I love you."

As he whirled southward alone he tried to believe her words the unweighed outburst of hysteria, but it was futile. No self-deception could gloze her behest. She had meant literally what she said, and he roused in passion — as she would have it — to do battle. By her handiwork it was again a bitter personal struggle between him and Redfern, and all the old bramble growth of injuries given and received flourished afresh to fret and inflame his wrath.

It was his intention to see Maddox at once, but he reached the city too late for immediate action. Early in the morning, however, he sought the redoubtable boss's presence at the tawdry building which was the headquarters

of his clan. Neither man was prone to waste time in approach, and the door of the well-known back room which was Maddox's council-chamber had scarcely shut when Drew broached his business.

"Mr. Maddox," he said, "you stated not long ago that you should like to see me a candidate for the United States Senate."

"Yes, sir, I did," assented his auditor, gently.

"Since then I have in a measure come to your way of thinking."

Maddox ashed his cigar with nicety.

"My previous way of thinking," he dropped in mild amendment, his eye sauntering to a crayon portrait of his immediate predecessor.

Drew caught his breath, and for a vain instant waited until the abstracted gaze should meet his own.

"Am I to infer that you have changed your mind?"

"About that."

"May I ask why?"

Maddox turned his rocklike front squarely to his interlocutor at last.

"There's been a new deal," he vouchsafed calmly. "There's been a new deal, and you're no longer trumps."

CHAPTER XXIV

DREW met him with a face as stonily inscrutable as his own.

"I'm a poor card-player," he said. "Do you refer to Senator Wentworth's death?"

"I do," came the measured secretion of Maddox's speech. "I didn't want Wentworth again, but he had the right of way. He'd have given you the track peaceably, however, and so I favored you."

"You knew it was impossible."

"I didn't till you told me," returned Maddox, simply. "And now you say you want the job after all! If you didn't know your own mind, you can't reasonably expect me to know it."

Whether he confronted consummate guile or sheer obliquity of moral vision, or something of both, Drew was at no pains to unravel. His personal humiliation had gone far enough.

"I owed you the announcement of my intention," he said, rising. "That's all."

"Wait a minute, Drew," Maddox sent affa-

bly after him before he reached the door. "I guess it's only fair and above board for me to announce something myself. Of course, after you assured me so strongly that you weren't in the running, I felt free to look about. In a way I've promised another party my help. But don't let that cut any ice."

"It won't," Drew countered crisply. "Good day."

He went forth with clarified vision, sober yet undismayed. There was no need to ask whom Maddox had picked for his candidate. The past shed abundant light, and a future no more remote than the afternoon papers was to publish Maddox's conviction that the logical successor to the governor's admirable appointee was James Y. Redfern himself. It was an opinion with which many instantly differed, and at the eleventh hour of the retiring governor's term, Redfern made a politic declination of the honor with the statement that he would be a candidate before the Legislature.

Drew saw in the stirring days which followed that he had blundered in his commerce with Maddox. There was but one possible attitude toward him and all his works. The issue had broadened far beyond the merely personal; it

was no longer a question of feeding fat an ancient grudge; the pawn Redfern was overshadowed by the hand of the real player; the battle predicted by wise old Spedding was nigh. Maddox the sinister, Maddox the spoilsman unabashed, Maddox the unresponsible sponsor for civic loot, extortion, and blackmail; Maddox, whom the pulpit and the press denounced as the moral accomplice of the gambler, the harlot, and the criminal, was at last stretching out his hand to snare the state! It was with this spirit that Drew strove to fire the closest of his adherents, though it was far from his intent to flaunt his own practice or the methods of up-state party men in general as models of political purity. In his heart of hearts he harbored a keen regret that passion had flung him, rather than some better man, to the forefront of the fight.

"It's only the spasmodic reformer who has the cheek to make a campaign emblem of the halo," he told Dick one night in his Albany headquarters. "I'm merely a machine man, dyed-in-the-wool, with a tolerably elastic conscience toward ways and means if the thing to be done is worth while. We can't always be dainty in weapons. The goal itself is the real criterion, and that's the eternal rock on which the down-

state people and the up-state people began to split long before Maddox and I were born."

With this avowal in vivid remembrance, Dick thought his uncle's position needlessly quixotic in an affair which just afterward came to light. It was the night before the meeting of the joint caucus of the legislative majority, and after many days of guesswork and mirage the situation had begun to define itself. Drew's lead was certain. That fact had been patent from the outset. But whether this advantage would amount to control, no man might positively say. If he had confronted Redfern alone, the issue would never have seemed open to question, but it was no longer a matter of Redfern singly. Chronic malcontents of the western counties, with whom Spedding had had more than a few brushes, now put forward a candidate of their own, one Lawrence by name, and the impression was common that the guiding genius of Maddox had engineered a quasi-coalition. Drew had gone to bed, but was yet awake when Harris, who had been absent since early the previous day, entered his bedroom adjoining and assailed the connecting door.

"Reading in bed?" he said, advancing to peer at the volume. "And fiction at that! I've a tale here that discounts fiction. Philip, I have

proof — sworn proof, mind you — that Redfern bought one of the up-state assemblymen."

"You mean the member from Tuscarora, I suppose?"

Dick's countenance fell ludicrously.

"How in thunder do you know?" he gasped.

"I guessed."

Dick brightened.

"Then you have nothing more tangible than suspicions?"

"Not much else. McQuade reported some of the lobby chatter."

"Well, I've something better — or worse, as you like it," Dick said, producing a little sheaf of papers. "I have the sworn testimony of men who know of the actual transfer of spondulics!"

Drew gave the affadavits a lawyer-like examination, methodically refolded them, and sat propped among his pillows gravely preoccupied.

"No flaw in that evidence, I take it?" Dick hazarded complacently.

"No. It is conclusive."

"I should say so. I had to go to New York this morning to clinch the matter."

"Thank you, boy."

Harris waited a respectful interval for his chief's thought to crystallize in speech and deed,

but becoming impatient at last he jogged him with an eager: —

"Well, what do you think of it?"

"It's the sad common story of the man who should have been studying scientific agriculture to lift the mortgage on his farm instead of running for office."

"Pillar in his church and father of six," added Dick.

"Not unusual details."

"There'll be great pickings for the corner grocery statesmen in his district when this thing comes out. But how shall you use it? That's the problem. If you give the story to the press to-night, — it's not too late, — it will knock Redfern higher than Gilderoy's kite before the caucus can even meet. But I suppose that's hardly to your taste," he pursued, seeing Drew irresponsive. "Too journalistic, too theatrical, eh? Still, I can't see that it will be any less sensational to spring it in caucus or legislative session. How shall you make it public, anyhow?"

"In no way."

"What!" Dick bounced off his perch on the foot-rail. "You don't mean to say you won't make this thing public at all?"

"I do, boy."

"With this combination lined up against you! This is the one case of boodling that has come to light, but you're not the innocent to suppose there aren't others under cover?"

"No."

"I say fight fire with fire."

"And bribes with bribes? Your logic comes home to that."

"Why, yes," cried Dick, recklessly. "I think I would if it came to a pinch."

"No New York man has yet gone into the United States Senate with that stigma upon his election. I am not afraid that Redfern will establish a precedent. Assuredly I shall not."

"Yet as state chairman you don't let yourself scrutinize the final use of every dollar of a campaign fund. Your state committeemen render no accounts, and it's mighty convenient that they don't sometimes. Moreover, you can't convince me that all those city fathers fell into line for our street-railway franchise simply out of principle. They might not have got the dough as the *Mail* intimated, but I could see with half an eye that their friends got contracts."

Drew smiled upon him affectionately.

"Aren't we wandering a bit?"

"I dare say. But if your statement that the goal itself's the criterion is to hold water —"

"Then I am proved inconsistent? I'm often that."

Harris was keenly disappointed and took no pains to conceal it. Drew captured his hand.

"Thank you again for all you've done, Dick. Don't be piqued because I can't publish this abroad. I hold it back through no tenderness for this clumsy assemblyman; he deserves punishment; nor for Redfern, as you know well enough. It would hit the party hardest, you see, and back of that — above that, I might better say — the state itself, of which in our several ways we are all proud."

Twenty-four hours later the forces were aligned in the open. The joint caucus had met, organized, listened to the speeches of nomination, and cast a single ballot whose poll fell short by three votes only of a majority for Drew. Then the rumored coalition betrayed its reality. With the caucus in its present temper a second ballot might mean a rout, and the two lesser factions accordingly forced an adjournment. Absent in body, — and at no time during the struggle did he set foot in Albany, — Maddox was most emphatically present in mind.

Legislators and spectators trooped out of the

capitol into the wintry night and thronged the hotel headquarters of the three candidates. Drew was at home to all who came, and wore the look, if not the heart, of a victor, since there were more than a few long faces to be shortened. At the last he had known his resources to a man, and therefore met the foreseen. He had not indulged in prophecy, however, and those who had hoped all things were proportionately cast down. Harris was disconsolate.

"You'd be the caucus nominee now if you had taken my advice," he muttered.

"Get out, you wet blanket!" Drew rallied. "Model yourself upon Assemblyman McQuade over there."

"There's nothin' left 'em but th' formal surrender," Dick could hear the Irishman holding forth with his brogue at its raciest. "Th' 'journment a victhry f'r them? You're full of prunes! 'Tis a white flag! Of course there'll be nothin' doin' in th' Senate an' Assembly to-morrow, but th' second ballot in joint caucus 'll do th' thrick."

He erred. The second ballot of the following night did not do the trick, nor yet the third ballot, nor the fourth, nor fifth, all of which the combined opposition permitted before they once again resorted to the expedient of adjournment.

This was the story of four successive encounters. By day the Legislature would gather itself together in joint convention, and before crowded galleries repeat monotonously the unvarying poll of the preceding night. The newspapers devoted column upon column to the deadlock, and their editors, each according to his bias, lectured the legislators upon their plain duty to the state. Then the week ended, the contending forces scattered, and a Sunday tranquillity brooded over the battlefield.

Drew remained upon the ground against the friendly counsellings of Harris who intended a circling flight which should encompass not only the *Post-Messenger* office at home, but New York and Harriet.

"I'd use the truce to run down and see Katherine if I were you," Dick advised, suit-case in hand. "It would bring her up to date and put ginger into you."

Drew found neither argument persuasive. The abiding image of a face spirit-pale against its inky veilings was sufficient incentive. Furthermore, though he had not spoken with Katherine since that night in the dingy depot, she knew absolutely all he had to tell. No day had passed over her without its letter from him, and

most brought also telegrams couched in a cipher code which they had long since found occasion to adopt.

Monday night's balloting brought no change. Tuesday dawned with the press clamorous and the temper of the Legislature parlous. From both quarters blew a wind which, if not ill, was at least admonitory. A Lawrence partisan summed it up for McQuade in the Assembly lobby just as the routine joint convention of the two houses began its perfunctory work.

"If it was good politics for Livingston and Redfern to pull out of the state convention deadlock," he pertinently asked, "why isn't it good politics for Drew and Redfern now? A doctor shouldn't shy at his own medicine."

McQuade occasionally ran short of arguments, but he never lacked a reply.

"A hell of a lot you know about medicine," he retorted. "Accordin' t' th' Red Book you're a grocer. Shtick t' your sand-an'-sugar, me man!"

As the contest progressed this daily formality had become more and more a popular spectacle; and the general belief in an impending solution of some sort had sufficed to pack the lofty chamber's galleries, and to abuse the lax privilege of the floor. Drew himself chanced now to be

among the crowd behind the lobby rail, as the senators filed in two by two and the lieutenant governor took his place beside the speaker; and McQuade paused on his way to his seat to beg that he shut his ears against such heresy as he had just rebuked. Meanwhile the gavel fell, and the monotony of the roll-call went forward, each man rising to announce his preference for Lawrence, Redfern, or Drew, precisely as he had risen and spoken time and again before. Then all at once befell an unwonted departure from the worn formula. Drew swung round upon the sudden hush and beheld one of the assemblymen from his own county swaying in his place obviously under stress of some powerful mental excitement. The man stood just behind the temporary seats in the well set apart for the senators, and accordingly in full view of the now breathlessly attentive throng. Though his words came low and brokenly, not one auditor lost their paralyzing significance.

"I feel it my — my duty to say," he faltered, "that I have been offered a — a bribe to vote for Mr. Drew. This occurred day before yesterday — in Two Rivers. The — the sum was a thousand dollars, and the name of the man who offered it is Harris — Richard Harris."

CHAPTER XXV

For a long moment, while the man who made this astounding statement drooped to his seat, the whole vast chamber seemed to hold its breath. The mouth of the lieutenant governor fell foolishly ajar; his eye questioned the Speaker's, and found it blankly uninspired; the gavel of authority hung flaccidly in air. Then all was sudden uproar and confusion.

The outburst spurred Drew to self-defence, and he laid hold upon his dazed lieutenant with a grip of steel. A faithful aide, McQuade had seldom served as his legislative spokesman, but the emergency would wait upon no fastidious choice of instrument.

"Quick!" he charged. "Down into your place and demand a committee of investigation! It must come first from us!"

McQuade shot from Drew's arm like a stone from a sling, surged through the crush, and clamored for recognition. A dozen others, foes and well-wishers alike yet in most part hostile, were equally insistent, but the now self-possessed man

behind the gavel caught sight of McQuade's propelling force, and took his cue accordingly. The floor was McQuade's, and the attack met its first offset in rugged terms which forever endeared the Irishman to Drew and Drew's stanch adherents. The untoward happening was assigned its parliamentary pigeonhole, and the roll-call went forward. If the blow had been aimed to demoralize the ballot, it was a futile stratagem. The figures remained unchanged.

The present was saved. It was vastly another matter to face the future. Of his personal innocence Drew made a ringing assertion to the newspaper representatives who waylaid him before he could gain his headquarters, and continued to haunt his threshold for hours. He assured them that Harris would court a searching inquiry, but a carking doubt lurked behind his surface confidence. The accuser had been so positive, so manifestly sincere in his disclosure which cost him obvious pain. He was a Redfern man, but of a name unsmirched by any of the hints and half-assertions of corruption which had latterly swarmed about his candidate's canvass. No one had ever seen reason to doubt his word; hundreds had put their faith in it. He was a trustee of charities, a director of banks, a

painstaking, respected worker in his modest legislative groove.

"There's a hideous mistake somewhere, Larry," Drew said. "That man Wilkins was telling what he believed to be the truth."

"Oh, I don't know," McQuade doubted. "He's stood for James Y. through thick and thin."

"*I* know."

"But you'll not be takin' his word before Dick Harris's?"

"We don't know Dick's story yet."

"We know he's got horse-sense anyhow. But I can't figger out what under th' blue canopy's keepin' him away fr'm Albany."

"I've wired him at Two Rivers; I've wired him at New York. They'll use his absence against him. You see he *was* in Two Rivers Sunday. McQuade, you don't think — he's not dropped anything which would make you think that he —" Drew broke off with a groan. "Oh, I can't doubt Dick!"

The spectacle of his chief with the barriers down was too much for McQuade.

"Doubt *him?*" he blurted huskily. "Not by a jugful! An' if I catch anybody doin' it, I'll punch his nut, I will!"

But the doubting heads were soon too many for McQuade's heroic dissuasion. The investigating committee was prompt in beginning its probing, and a sensation-loving mob jammed itself into an inadequate little room of the capitol to see accuser and accused stand face to face. Wilkins held himself prepared to testify; Harris alone was unready, and the hearing went over till the morning because of him. Night drew on without direct word. The *Post-Messenger* office telegraphed that he had left there Sunday evening, presumably for New York. Messages to his usual metropolitan stopping-place and to a club he frequented failed to locate him. Harriet Reeves made no response to two telegrams.

Meanwhile public opinion was making. Legislative Albany knew Wilkins for a man of probity; it knew Richard Harris merely as a rather volatile young newspaper man with a precocious knowledge of the seamy side of human nature and apparently few scruples against exploiting it. The one professed himself ready at a minute's notice to substantiate his charges; the other had sought parts unknown, and his friends could still set no definite time when he would confront his traducer.

While Redfern washed his hands of responsi-

bility for Wilkins's bombshell, his faction was not backward in profiting by the demoralization it wrought. As the hours lapsed, man after man carried Drew tales of the undermining of his support. His every lieutenant was gloomy with forebodings of the swiftly approaching caucus of the night. One seceding vote might loose an avalanche, and when Drew thought of Redfern's traffickings with the Tuscarora weakling, the sworn proofs of whose purchase lay even now at hand, he foresaw only too clearly what might be done with those like him. In a moment's privacy he went over the papers again. The chain was perfect to a link. The poor creature's boasts before his neighbors of what he might if he would; his conferences and closetings; his sudden affluence and liquidation of debts long evaded; his maudlin babble which brought the deed home to Redfern himself — all was here. Dick had indeed done his burrowings well. Dick, forsooth! And who was Dick to cast this stone!

It had come to that at last. Were Dick's hands no less defiled? A harpy brood of inferences and suspicions, battened down till now, flocked forth and did their poisonous worst. He reviewed the lad's apprenticeship with a metro-

politan newspaper whose cleverness and moral standard were alike diabolic, and hunted down traces of its influence upon his later life. He thought, with a twinge, of his keen-witted aid in the cut-throat, street-railway war which was now such ancient history. The things they had done had been fair enough in war, — the vast civil strife of capital against capital, — but it was a grim school in which Dick had proved himself so apt a scholar. Then, his recent words! His frank advocacy of fighting bribes with bribes!

The room went black in the corners while he pondered. He roused, moved to a window, and looked down upon the home-going breadwinners climbing the steep ascent of the street. In two hours, two hours and a half at utmost, the fateful caucus would assemble. For an absorbed interval he passed in mental review the as yet intact band of his supporters, weighing them man by man. They had attached themselves to his cause for divers motives, some patriotic, some gendered of party habit, some selfish without disguise. The last seemed wofully numerous in this searching scrutiny. Could he trust them in extremity?

He turned at a tap at his door.

"News, Larry?"

"No good news," said McQuade, and un-

burdened himself of one more dismal yarn of the corridors. He wound up fatuously, "But don't be believin' all them highbinders say."

Taken singly its weight was trivial; as the culmination of a series it served to kick the beam. Drew made no direct comment, but he turned a switch, flooded the room with light, and arranging the damning papers in orderly sequence, buttoned them grimly under his coat.

"Larry," he said, "I want you to find out as quietly as may be just where Redfern is and who is with him."

McQuade gasped.

"Were you thinkin' of speakin' with James Y.?" he demanded incredulously, when speech returned to him.

"Yes."

"An' alone?"

"There'll be no lying to fear," Drew returned, meeting his implication. "Make as few inquiries for Redfern as you can and if possible avoid asking his hangers-on."

"Be easy as t' that," reassured McQuade from the door. "There's a chambermaid on this floor as thinks I'm th' one man in th' Assembly, an' if it's her afternoon off, I know a smart bell-boy that's on."

He was not long gone. Redfern's headquarters opened upon the same corridor as Drew's, and, without recourse to any eyes or ears save his own, McQuade made hurried report that the candidate was in his rooms and alone.

"He was startin' down t' feed his face an' went back for somethin' he'd forgot, leavin' his gang in th' elevator."

Drew left his room straightway.

"I shall spoil his appetite," he let fall grimly. "Thank you, Larry."

McQuade stayed his going an instant.

"You'll not be beggin' favors of James Y., I guess?"

Drew shook his head.

"I'm not in a begging mood."

McQuade saw that now. The carriage of the man he watched move resolutely down the hall and enter Redfern's door was not a suppliant's.

It could have been but some five minutes afterward that Dick jumped from the car-step of a belated train and by gradual stages found himself the man of the hour. In his brief transit from train to omnibus, a man he knew slightly gaped at him as if he were a ghost and nudged a companion to share the spectacle. As the bus toiled up the precipitous Albany streets a person

sitting opposite, of whom he could fish up no faintest recollection, brought him under steady fire of the most uncomfortably piercing eyes he had ever beheld. While passing a newspaper bulletin girt with electric bulbs, he read incuriously that "Harris" was "still missing," and whimsically concluded that some one of the name had murdered or defaulted. Then he noticed that the man with the eyes had read, marked, and was digesting not altogether inwardly the same intelligence. The bus had backed round before the hotel entrance before the fellow's comical inference could evoke a smile, and in the lobby he forgot it. A newspaper correspondent pounced upon him while his foot still touched the doorsill.

"For old times' sake, Dicky boy," he entreated, "give me a scoop of this affair! Remember that Brooklyn trunk mystery I threw your way that time! You'll have to pump up something for the rest of the fellows — here they come, drat 'em! — but give me the inside track!"

The pack was now upon him in full cry.

"Hail! Corrupter of the virtuous!" chaffed one.

"Talk about the power of the Press," said another.

"Bribe *me*, Dicky," invited a third. "I'm poor and needy."

Harris backed off and considered them.

"What ails you jackasses?" he asked sweetly.

He only provoked a fresh outburst. The opportunity to interview a fellow-reporter is not given every day.

"Oh, fudge!"

"You do it well!"

"Wake up and find yourself infamous!"

Then they tardily comprehended that he shammed nothing, was actually ignorant of the day's disclosures. Half a dozen lurid evening editions were whipped out of pocket for his perusal. The head-lines in themselves were sufficient to tell the tale, and Harris fell upon the pith of the matter swiftly. They saw his face pale and then go crimson. Chagrin succeeded bewilderment, anger displaced chagrin. His look wrung jocosity out of them like water from a sponge. One finally — he was the youngest — asked: —

"Will you make a statement for publication?"

"It's a damned lie!" flamed Dick. "That's my statement! It's a dastardly lie! Where is this man Wilkins?"

Some one had lately seen him in the writing room and said so. Dick strode promptly toward

that quarter followed by a trailing cloud of witnesses who choked the apartment to the corridor. Wilkins drew back as if sorely tempted to put the width of a table between himself and Harris, but stopped and held his ground. He was of a mild, gold-spectacled aspect, and his unexpected boldness in the face of an onslaught, which seemed at any moment liable to become physically unpleasant, had a sort of moral dignity that attested his sincerity.

"Mr. Wilkins, you are either a lunatic or a perjurer," said Dick, with a deceptive calm. "Have you the cheek to stick to your cock-and-bull story of a thousand-dollar bribe before me?"

"The investigating committee will listen to both our stories in the morning, Mr. Harris," answered the little man, fidgeting with his pen-holder. "I bear you no malice personally. I am performing a painful duty — a deeply painful duty. These things smutch the honor of the whole Legislature, and my own comfort ought not to stand in the way of their uncovering."

Dick was momentarily baffled. The man spoke and bore himself like no man's henchman.

"Oh, but we must thresh this mess out somehow!" he exclaimed desperately. "What is your story? In heaven's name, out with it!"

"To-morrow."

"Now! If you are the free man you assume to be and not James Redfern's tool, you will do me this justice."

"Well," assented Wilkins, "if you must have it, you shall. You don't deny that you were in Two Rivers Sunday afternoon?"

"Of course not. Neither do I deny meeting you as I came out of the Valley Club and trying to convince you that you ought to support my uncle. There are a thousand reasons why all decent men should, and I —"

"That's it!" broke in Wilkins, excitedly. "You put your hand in your pocket and said, 'I can offer you a thousand reasons!'"

There was a moment's hush. Then burst a tempest of laughter. Wilkins's face pictured a kaleidoscopic series of emotions whose end was sheepish, rosy, contrite shame.

"But I thought — I misconstrued —" he stammered. "There were so many — so many rumors of such things! Sir, I have greatly wronged you. I will make reparation. To-morrow — to-morrow I —"

"And this was your bribery," said Dick, contemptuously. "Your thousand-dollar bribe! You hayseed! You unmitigated hayseed!"

CHAPTER XXVI

McQuade had wormed through the crush to Harris's side in time for Wilkins's discomfiture.

"Get up t' th' rooms with you," he enjoined, bottling up a war-whoop. "I misdoubt there'll be hell t' pay. Where in ballyhack have you been?" he demanded as they gained the elevator.

"It's nobody's cursed business," fumed Dick, still at white heat. "Can't a fellow leave town a day without all this tummy-rummy breaking loose?"

Drew was entering his own room as they met.

"I've wired everywhere for you, boy," he said.

"T' hell an' gone," put in McQuade. "But everything's O.K., Phil," he added, hastily sketching the scene below stairs. "It was damned comical t' see Wilkins crawfish. I knew th' lad was up t' snuff."

"I've wired everywhere," Drew repeated, as the inner door closed upon himself and Dick alone.

"Did you try 'The Beeches'?"

"'The Beeches!' What were you doing at 'The Beeches'?"

"I took Harriet there early this morning. I haven't seemed to be of much use here, and as no change appeared likely I stayed till night. We cheered Katherine up immensely."

"Cheered her!"

Preoccupied with his own grievance, Harris missed the bitterness of Drew's low exclamation.

"I didn't suppose the whole blamed state was interested in my movements," he went on disgustedly. "Bribe old Wilkins! What won't people swallow? A word from you ought to have nailed the lie."

"No one could meet the charge but yourself."

A peculiar something in his manner fixed Dick's attention. Drew was pale and his face looked drawn.

"By heaven!" Dick cried; "I think you believed it too!"

Drew made no denial.

"You defended such measures, remember."

"In a moment of impatience —"

"Your words were downright, unequivocal."

"Oh, but you, Philip, should have known, should have seen — yet who could see daylight in that tangle!"

"I should — perhaps," Drew admitted dully. "It was unjust to you."

"Well, everything is coming out in the wash," Dick consoled. "That duffer Wilkins will do the honorable thing before the committee to-morrow. His backdown to-night was public enough in all conscience. Everybody knows the truth, and the thing won't injure us in caucus a hair's breadth. In fact it ought to help, for conservative people —" Drew's strained expression again made him pause. "What has happened?" he demanded. "I remember now McQuade hinted something — something about trouble! What has happened, Philip? What have you done?"

Drew took a bundle of papers from his pocket and laid them on the table.

"I've used them," he announced. "Used them as a club — met scandal with scandal."

"You used the Tuscarora papers after all?"

"Not as you meant — privately. I have shown them to Redfern alone."

Dick himself turned white.

"You let him think you believed me guilty?"

"No!"

"It was the implication."

"No, Dick, a thousand times no. It was not to kill the charge against you that I acted. I bade him probe it to the bottom."

"Then what—"

"All the afternoon he has been undermining me—"

"If I had only come!"

"Never mind that, boy. They made inroads, I say. I dared not risk to-night's ballot with things as they were. I used your weapon to force Redfern from the field."

"He's out! Redfern's out?"

"We're both out."

"You, Philip?"

"I could not oust him and myself remain."

"I've ruined you!" Dick groaned.

"Nonsense. The main thing isn't my election. It's his defeat, which is now assured. We've agreed that the status quo shall remain unchanged to-night. To-morrow we'll break the deadlock."

"But what are you to say to people?"

"We are ostensibly withdrawing in the interest of party harmony."

"Harmony," Dick repeated, struggling to grasp the extent of the devastation; "it will be hades."

Yet there was the surface appearance of concord. The collapse of the bribery charge in a gale of laughter seemed to sweeten the air. Redfern pulled a civil if not radiant face over his withdrawal, and party organs called the scenes in

caucus at Lawrence's election a love feast. But Redfern posturing before the limelight, and Redfern among his friends, were widely dissimilar men. His explanations in either case hardly explained, but his vengeful rumblings and veiled threats imbued many with the impression that he had been foully used. Drew believed that the man told Maddox something like the truth for their intimacy seemed unshaken, while a caustic thrust at his own impaired prestige gained extensive publicity. "A state leader," defined Maddox, "is a man who is master of the situation."

The gibe seemed to sting Dick more than Drew, and his remorseful self-upbraiding finally caused his uncle to interpose.

"I can't let you go away like this," he expostulated, as the young man was about to leave for home. "You mustn't think I really wanted that office. I never sought the senatorship for its own sake."

"I felt that."

"And Lawrence is all right. His caucus alliance with Maddox was perfectly legitimate. I don't censure him. It is no hardship to see the place go to a man of his stamp."

"No hardship that you didn't land what you set out to get in the face of all the state!"

"I set out to block the Maddox-Redfern game — and I did."

"But at what a cost. Think what they're saying."

"You magnify this gossip."

"You make light of it to comfort me."

Drew threw his arm across Dick's shoulder.

"Would it contribute to your peace of mind to know that the new senator and I understand one another?"

Harris brightened in a way that was sufficient answer.

"You mean that he knows the real cause of his good luck — that he feels indebted?"

"Precisely. I mean also that, though he and I don't think alike in some things, he and Maddox agree in nothing. In time of need, between you and me, he'll be found where we want him."

"There!" cried Dick. "I might have known you'd give the merry ha-ha to the croakers who're trying to prove you politically dead. Thank you for telling me that, old man. It isn't such a smash as I thought."

But Drew himself took no comfort. He could mend his political fences perhaps, but he could not restore his self-respect. For the first time

in his mature life he had been vainglorious. He had boasted like a Gascon, bragged before the woman he loved; and he had failed to make good his vaunt. He who was to crush Redfern for her sake had himself narrowly escaped annihilation. The senatorship for which they had battled was another's. He spared himself nothing before the harsh tribunal of his man's pride, asked no mercy, obtained none. By the same token he could not bring himself to beg of Katherine what he refused himself. Her leniency — her love — if it came, must come unasked.

A meeting was imminent. Despite the deadlock, Drew had found time for an inventory of Wentworth's affairs of a sort for which his fellow-executor frankly owned himself disqualified. The upshot was startling. By a not unfamiliar paradox the statesman, whose wise fiscal policy had netted millions for the nation, had mishandled his private resources like a child. The exposition which Drew laid before the admiral was as limpid as a mountain brook. Wildcat mining-stock, patent rights in useless inventions, mortgages upon Dakota "bad lands" — the whole sorry coil unwound itself to Austin's lay comprehension, and left him aghast.

"What a thing to tell his child!" he groaned.

"Why tell Katherine? Why not keep her ideal of her father as it is?"

"Not tell her! You can't avoid it. She has a head for business, Philip, a better one than mine."

"Not at present. She asks no questions now. Later, when questions come, we'll have a better showing."

Austin shook his head

"She knew what it cost her father to live," he answered. "She will count upon a like amount and plan to spend an income that's cut in two. No; you can't cover it up."

"We can make it up," asserted Drew. "Admiral, leave this to me. I am fortunately placed for an executor. I see opportunities every day to make dollars earn dollars, and —"

"Dollars, yes," Austin cut him off. "I'm no great shakes as a business man, but I don't believe I'm quite what the country people call a gump. You can't make salted mines and alkali deserts yield anything but trouble. The dollars you talk about turning over to Katherine are your own."

Drew reddened.

"Nonsense," he laughed.

"Not a bit of it. It's not nonsense. It's a

very chivalrous intention, but you mustn't carry it out, Philip. If you were already Katherine's husband, it would be another affair, but you're not married yet."

Drew could not ask him to hold his peace until marriage should put another face upon the matter. His wedding-day might never dawn. All other persuasions left Austin unmoved.

"One or the other of us must tell her," he said firmly.

"You tell her, admiral," Drew begged quickly. "You are her kin."

It was upon Austin's tongue to reply that Drew was her lover, but he saved that puzzled observation for the ear of his wife whom he immediately rejoined at the quiet uptown hotel in New York to which they had persuaded Katherine. He would have liked very much to speak of the generous plan he had felt obliged to veto, but Drew had exacted a promise that he would say nothing about it. In the morning he reappeared in Madison Square bringing the girl's request for an interview.

"She wants to know precisely where she stands," he announced. "I could give her a general notion, but of course nobody knows the minutiæ like yourself."

"I will come with you whenever you like."

"Then come now. The sooner we get through it the better."

"Yes; the sooner the better," Drew assented, but he was not thinking of the senator's bungled money matters. Would Katherine extend a hand across the abyss?

He could judge nothing from her greeting, and he plunged at once into his inventory of the estate. It was far from a cold-blooded analysis of assets and liabilities. Drew made no concealment of losses, but Wentworth's glaring indiscretions were made to stand in a kindly, even lovable light. The admiral was aglow with admiration and tipped his wife a covert wink.

The girl sat through it all in a sort of stupor. The business head upon which she had once prided herself was in present subjection to a most unbusinesslike heart. From the dismal chaos of her thoughts she could drag but one fixed purpose.

"I must keep 'The Beeches,'" she declared, as Drew paused. "Whatever else goes, I must keep 'The Beeches.'"

"That is the wise course," he answered. "The land seems always to have paid. With

vineyards, such as I believe your father planned, it would pay still better. Moreover, a way has opened to lift the mortgage."

Austin pricked his ears.

"How's that?"

Drew's eyes were upon his documents.

"I mean through these suburban lots near Washington," he replied, laying a finger upon a clause of the inventory. "After being a dead weight for years, they're at last looking up. We've had an offer for them which would more than clear 'The Beeches.'"

"Isn't this something new?" Austin persisted.

"Yes."

"Since yesterday?"

"Since yesterday," Drew returned with the same verbal thrift. "By the time I come down from Albany again, it will be in shape to discuss in detail."

"You two will do what you think best," Katherine said.

The soft-hearted admiral saw her lip quiver, coughed strenuously, and found some errand to take him out of the room. His wife followed. Drew and Katherine were alone in a silence broken only by the clatter of hoofs and wheels in the avenue without.

"If she loves me, she will give some sign," thought the man.

The woman said to herself: "If he loves me, he will speak now. He will tell me that the money is as nothing — that rich or poor, he loves me."

And neither spoke.

CHAPTER XXVII

MRS. AUSTIN found the girl, face down, upon a divan and knelt beside her.

"Katherine," she said cheerily, "you're not such a pauper, you know."

"Yes, Aunt Sue," came the muffled answer.

"And your father's fame won't suffer. John was not the first great financier to muddle his private affairs. I've heard something similar about Hamilton, and the admiral was just mentioning some Englishman — Cobden, I think."

"It isn't father."

Mrs. Austin smoothed the dark head for a thoughtful moment.

"Dearie, is it Philip?"

No answer from the pillows save a long intake of breath.

"I was afraid so," the elder woman commented. "Can I help?"

"No-o."

"I'm all the mother you have, dear. And you're all I have to mother. My girl would

have been old enough for heartaches too had she lived."

Katherine's hand crept into her aunt's for an instant. Then Mrs. Austin saw her begin slowly to work a ring — Drew's ring — from her finger. With a cry of protest she stayed the girl's action and gathered her into her arms.

It was the girl's point of view which she saw in the broken talk which ensued. She was loath to impute a sordid motive to Drew, but the real reason of his silence was hidden, and her woman's championship followed the leading of her woman's heart. Nevertheless she counselled patience. Drew would be coming back shortly. The mist of misunderstanding would disappear.

But Drew kept closely to Albany during the remaining Lenten days, and delegated the formalities of the land transfer to Austin. He did not need to invent work to kill care. The combined watch upon Maddox, the Legislature, and his personal business regulated that; while as Easter drew on, Dick's wedding preparations contributed lighter interludes. Indeed, toward the end, the interludes threatened to exclude all else.

"A best man must count on doing something besides fee the clergyman and juggle the ring," Dick instructed gravely. "Of course I don't

expect the chairman of the state committee to ransack fashion magazines and learn whether a fellow should keep his frock-coat open or shut, or if the ushers' gloves need one button or a dozen. You'd think the ceremony wasn't binding without such flummeries, to hear some idiots talk. What I do want, though, is gumption, tact, a clear head, nerve for an emergency —"

"In fine," Drew suggested, "the ideal second for a duel."

"Oh, laugh," invited his nephew, savagely. "How should you like to have your clergyman get the sexton's fee, as I knew to happen? I tell you everything depends upon the best man."

"I'm told there are professionals nowadays. Perhaps you'd better look the matter up."

"I'd as soon employ a hired mourner! It's moral support I need, — sympathy, intelligent sympathy."

In the end Drew gave all he asked. He saw him safely through a hilarious bachelor dinner Saturday evening, and the yet more nerve-wearing suspense of Easter. He tactfully filled in the difficult hours between Monday's perfunctory breakfast and the journey to the church, and ultimately brought his principal into the vestry in what he assured him was the pink of form.

"Cool!" Harris averred. "I feel as cool as a polar expedition."

He surreptitiously tapped wood, however, to charm away possible bad results from the boast, and fell with feverish zest to scrutinizing the ecclesiastical portraits which adorned the panelling of the quiet room.

"Fine-looking lot of men, aren't they?" he remarked, fidgeting with his gloves. "I don't know when I've seen a finer lot. That bishop over the mantelpiece has a particularly fine face. Fine one on his right, too. Fine one on his left. Fine — say: do you think I could smoke a cigarette?"

"Hardly. Good carving in that table, Dick."

"Fine! Say, a smoke would do me no end of good."

"It's out of the question here. Don't you think Harriet looked uncommonly pretty last night when we called?"

"Fine! I could put my head out of the door, you know."

"Out of the door?"

"To smoke, you know. It always quiets me. It —"

"Ss-h! Here comes the rector."

Dick shook hands limply with the matter-of-

fact person who was to conduct this tremendous morning's business, and uttered a staccato laugh at what he took to be a clerical pleasantry. Reflecting that Drew might wish to embrace this chance to hand the clergyman his fee, he turned again to the portraits and with glazed vision passed a row of them in review, which led him finally out into the anteroom communicating with the body of the church. Here Drew found him with his eye glued to the aperture of a door left just ajar.

"There are hundreds of 'em out there," he whispered hoarsely. "Hundreds and hundreds. I didn't know Harriet had so many friends. Queer how people flock to weddings. Morbid curiosity, I call it. I'll never go to another as long as I live."

Drew shut out the enervating spectacle.

"Well," he said, "that fee is off our hands. His reverence had a surplice half over his head when I broached the matter, but he didn't seem to think me inopportune."

"Got the ring safe?"

"Yes."

"Let me see it."

Drew complied.

"Mind you don't put it in the wrong pocket."

"No."

"Don't wait till the very last minute to fish it out either."

"No."

"And don't let go of it till you see that I've got a firm hold. A duffer I know dropped it."

"I'll try not."

"Hark!" Dick started like a blooded steed. "Oh, the organ."

"It's been playing for five or ten minutes."

"Has it? Of course. I think I must be a trifle nervous."

"Ridiculous."

"Oh, nothing to speak of—just the natural exhilaration. Means a deuce of a lot to a man, you know. Means—" He halted to bend a critical eye upon his legs. "Good enough!" he ejaculated. "They're at it, but nobody'll see 'em now."

"See what?"

"My knees shake. They always used to do it when I was a kid and felt rattled. Thought I'd outgrown it. But no matter! Wide trousers save the day. Fashion good thing sometimes."

"The wedding party has reached the church, sir," a sexton's assistant announced.

Dick straightened at the summons, forgot his

knees altogether, and went forth to his bride like a soldier. His "I will" was delivered with a trumpet note, and in fact his whole bearing, the Rubicon of the vestry crossed, was such as to subject him later to much admiring remark.

"It's nothing, my dear boy, nothing," he assured a prospective bridegroom in the little company which flocked into the vestry to witness the signing of the register. "All you need is gumption, tact, a clear head — " then, perceiving his uncle close at hand, he ended hastily — "on the part of your best man."

He might have claimed anything he pleased. Drew had neither eyes nor ears for him. Katherine was standing within reach of his hand, her dark garments in sombre contrast to the draperies of the bride whose arms were about her. He caught the good wishes of the one, and something of the other's whispered regret that a substitute should have taken Katherine's place at the chancel.

"When you marry Philip," Harriet's voice now rose distinctly, "nothing shall prevent my being your maid of honor."

It was then that Katherine's eyes met Drew's, and she saw that he had overheard. Each knew the moment for a crisis; each searched the other's

face for a message; each missed the tenderness which pride masked, belied, and betrayed.

"Maid of nothing, Harriet," the young husband cut in upon them with a laugh. "You're a matron now."

CHAPTER XXVIII

FROM the foggy morning following Easter Monday when the chairman of the dominant party's state committee found a ring in his mail, Admiral Austin became the sole channel of communication between his niece and his fellow-executor. For months Drew paid New York only flying visits, and it was by the roundabout way of Dick that he heard that Katherine was trying to fill Harriet's vacant niche at the Settlement House.

The married are prone to exaggerate the forlornness of the bachelor, and Dick's and Harriet's happiness took a finer savor for the sentimental pity which they indulged for Drew. As a matter of fact, Drew's existence, though drab-colored, was not embittered. Indeed, at this time he reaped certain infinitely satisfying hours. For one thing he got keen pleasure from building Dick and Harriet a house, a wedding-gift which he made doubly dear by leaving its planning wholly in their hands. He saw now, further-

more, the realization of his project for transforming his boyhood playground to a public park after the design he had outlined to Spedding. By midsummer it was at length complete, and by a stroke of the pen passed into the city's hands. The public was not backward in signs of appreciation. An enthusiastic city council — inspired, it developed, by McQuade — even proposed to signalize the event by voting the donor a statue which Drew was put to no small exertion to escape.

"You'll be knowin' your own mind best," McQuade remarked sorrowfully, when he saw that Drew's refusal was absolute, "but it's a sure disappointment t' yours truly. Us boys had it all fixed as how, barrin' Frenchies, dagoes, an' such foreign labor, we'd let th' job t' th' best statute foundery doin' business. 'Twould have been a nobby thing all right."

"I can well believe it."

"It sure would. Th' new alderman fr'm th' gashouse district was in favor of sculpin' you in th' classical style, meanin' without clothes, but I says, 'Nit; Phil Drew's that modest he'd blush turkey-red every time he drove by an indelicate figger of himself wearin' nothing but a sheet. A Prince Albert is th' tasty thing these

days, lads,' I says. 'All th' up-to-date statutes wear 'em.'"

"It does seem to be the vogue," Drew smiled. Then, changing topic and tone, "Larry," he asked, "is it true that Magistrate O'Neil's son has gone to New York to take a clerkship in the dock department?"

McQuade dropped a reluctant nod.

"But th' judge never did lean our way, anyhow," he qualified. "F'r all his palaver, he was always James Y.'s man at th' finish."

Drew silently wished he might say as much for any of a fast-growing company of influential men in up-state counties who were in direct or indirect receipt of Maddox's benefits. He knew this for part and parcel of a far-reaching attempt to curry favor with the party at large through susceptible county chairmen. It was done on tiptoe, for with his mouth Maddox professed himself for peace; and with equal discretion Drew lit back-fires when and where he could. Maddox was at present in no position to stake open battle for the leadership, being locally engaged in one of his periodic struggles with reform. He had not to cope with fusion; the several elements of opposition were not sufficiently united for that; but three leading mayoralty tickets in the field

enlivened the campaign, and for the hour he was quite content to put loftier ambitions aside.

State campaign there was practically none. The single important office to be filled was judicial in character, and in this instance non-partisanship happily prevailed. The up-state voters were mainly concerned with mayoralty elections and the annual choice of assemblymen, and but for a marked off-year reaction against the national administration Drew's work would have been light. The new President's personality was not altogether engaging, many of his appointments had proved unpopular, his fiscal schemes were regarded with distrust, and finally a spectacular series of failures in Wall Street excited the business world. From late in August till the end, Drew toiled under a weight of misgiving which was amply justified by the returns. City after city went over to the enemy, and the Assembly was safe only by a margin which wore the aspect of defeat.

In shining contrast to the rout up state, Maddox scored an emphatic local victory, and by the same token Drew knew the great conflict to be near at hand. So others thought. The flutterings among the country chairmen, lest they be put to an open choice of masters, became frantic; the governor

brought on insomnia by premature crossing of his personal bridge; while early in December the President himself took alarm and summoned Drew to a Sunday conference at the White House. An intimation that it would conduce to the presidential comfort were he to shroud his journey in secrecy constrained him against his liking to leave New York like a thief in the night and to breakfast in Washington in obscurity. Under escort of a painfully discreet secretary he was finally ushered to a retired quarter of the Executive Mansion at an hour when the presidential household had in most part taken itself off to morning service.

The head of the nation had excused himself from church-going to his strait-laced wife under plea of a fictitious headache, and whether oppressed by a conviction of sin, or because he wished to forestall adverse criticism of his excessive caution, he prefaced the conference with a characteristic little homily of regret that all human dealings could not be conducted under the broad light of heaven and in sweet accord with the Golden Rule. He was a man of colorless amiability whose hobby was pacification. He had pacified himself into the White House.

"In this unhappy difference which has arisen among my New York friends," he said finally,

quitting generalities, "I need hardly assure you, my dear Mr. Drew, where my sympathies, indeed I may say my instinctive sympathies, lie."

Drew bowed with the outward respect due such an exalted well-wisher. It was his private conviction that the friendly soul would have let Maddox infer himself the richer for very much the same benign approval.

"Nevertheless," — this was a favorite word with the "Great Peacemaker," — "nevertheless you will readily understand that in my position I cannot always exercise the private citizen's prerogative of speaking one's mind."

"I understand, Mr. President," Drew filled in an oratorical pause.

"And if I should pursue in this instance what may seem a rigorously neutral course, you will appreciate that it is the official, rather than the citizen, who so acts?"

Drew smiled at these elaborate devices.

"I am forewarned," he said.

The President saw the smile, but construed it as a favoring sign.

"The personal equation eliminated, then," he continued briskly, "here is the situation in a nutshell. The administration sees bitter dissension in a quarter where it has counted upon unity and

hearty support. New York is too uncertain a state for divided counsels. Its two senators even now owe allegiance to different parties. This should not be so. The success of this administration, the good of the party, I may safely say the prosperity of the country, depend upon the reënforcement of our slender majority in the Senate. We must not let factional strife imperil this work. Your new Assembly —"

"Factional differences had nothing to do with reducing our majority in the Assembly," Drew interposed. "The causes were not local. Look at Ohio, at Illinois —"

"I know, I know," pursued the great man, blandly. "The off-year reaction is to be taken into account, but nevertheless you gentlemen of New York incur a heavy responsibility in permitting this internecine war to spread. Would you jeopard the election a year hence of a fitting colleague to Senator Lawrence? May I not hope, more amicable counsels prevailing, that that colleague will be yourself? A timely suggestion from me, I am optimistic enough to believe —"

"Does that strike you as a peace measure, Mr. President?" Drew queried incisively. He had looked from the beginning for some such appeal

to his ambition. "The senatorship has no attractions for me."

"No?" sighed his Excellency.

"Neither do I want war."

"I felt sure of your reasonableness."

"It is not I who am the aggressor. But I need not tell you that. You are a western man, Mr. President, but you know New York well enough to realize that the party up state is battling against a blight which has sunk the metropolitan organization beneath the contempt of decent men. It is Maddoxism we're fighting, sir, Maddoxism in all its—"

The presidential hand was uplifted to still the troubled waters; the presidential voice suavely inquired:—

"But, my dear Mr. Drew, didn't we agree to eliminate the personal phase?"

This Olympian aloofness baffled Drew. The President took his disgusted silence for assent.

"Remember," he pursued, "it is as individuals, not as leaders of moral or possibly immoral forces, that you and Mr. Maddox present yourselves to the administration. You come in your quasi-representative capacity rather, and as such I submit that it is your present duty to lay aside purely local disputes for the good of the common cause."

A wide choice of caustic retort lay open to Drew, but respect for the man's office and his perception of the tithe of truth which leavened the presidential sophistry bridled his tongue.

"I grant that this is no time for quarrelling among ourselves," he rejoined quietly. "Personally I am willing to call a truce."

"We need a stronger pact than that."

"An armed neutrality then?"

The President freed his most pacificatory smile.

"Mr. Drew," he cajoled, "it seems to me high time to employ what our dear old friend Spedding used to call the 'cement of majorities.'"

"I will make reasonable concessions."

"Very good. The thing I shall suggest seems to me to strike at the tap-root of the trouble. I allude to my accomplished friend Mr. Redfern."

"Redfern is less a cause than a symptom of disease."

The Great Peacemaker frowned slightly at this tart thrust at his major premise.

"An important symptom, at any rate," he urged. "I have reason to know that a timely concession in that direction would do incalculable good. But for your emphatic remark about the senatorship I should suggest that you make the contest for the seat next vacant, Mr. Redfern to leave you a free

field on condition that you back him for the governorship. With certain assurances on your part, I know Mr. Maddox would — "

"Impossible!" Drew exclaimed. "You can't know James Redfern's true character, Mr. President, — his unfitness for such a position of public trust! It is an impossible compromise."

"Which I do not press," disclaimed the Peacemaker. "There is a fortunate alternative, not state, but national. The Third Assistant Postmaster-General is being strongly urged for the post just made vacant by the death of our minister at Constantinople. In the event of such a transfer — and, confidentially, it may soon occur — a vacancy will result that some leading New Yorker ought to fill. It would seem to me a happy solution to offer the place to Mr. Redfern upon whose personal fitness I will assume the responsibility to pass."

Charity could no farther go. Drew maintained a grim silence.

"Well, my dear Mr. Drew?" came finally.

"What is there left me to say, sir? It doesn't become me to meddle with your appointments. Senatorial courtesy — "

"Senator Lawrence refers me to you. I ask your opinion."

"Then, as I questioned in my own case, is it a peace measure? I cannot believe it."

"But you personally would not deem it a hostile act?"

"I shall not squabble with the administration over patronage."

The President said that he would think it over, but Drew left him with the conviction that he would do what he was pleased to call his thinking with his mind made up. He felt that it was not so much a nostrum for harmony that the Great Peacemaker sought as the sure knowledge whether the Drew faction or the Maddox faction mustered the stronger battalions.

CHAPTER XXIX

THE die was soon cast. Before the first week of January had ended, Drew was besieged for his interpretation of Redfern's appointment. The press proclaimed that the administration's meddling meant war to the knife. Drew declined the rôle of public soothsayer, but he left his friends in no doubt about his opinion.

"War! Of course it means war," he told a lieutenant who brought word of fresh desertions. "Every cross-roads post-office which Redfern fills will become a Maddox outpost. Every soldier of fortune in the party will hie him to the camp which makes spoils its prime aim. The war is on and the first laurels belong to the allied enemy — the President and Maddox, the 'Puritan and the blackleg.'"

Signs of open strife abounded. From the Hudson to the Niagara the petty politicians trimmed their sails. The governor swung a distracted pendulum between rival advisers, pleasing neither. Maddox's legislative henchmen wan-

tonly filibustered wherever it would serve a factional end. When the spring days brought the session to a close, Drew left his Albany post with the feeling that he had cast off an old man of the sea.

He was not without his incubus, however. The cloud of business depression, whose shadow had worked disaster in November, disclosed no silver lining in the months succeeding, and Drew's personal interests were too intricately enmeshed in ticker-tape to let him be a dispassionate spectator. He had a down-town office in New York in association with the men whose projects he shared, and to this small cell in a vast hive overlooking the quiet graves of Trinity, he now came daily to pay the penalty of riches.

It was on returning here one afternoon from a protracted directors' meeting that he found Katherine's card and a pencilled request for an interview. Drew fingered the bit of pasteboard with an expression strange to that workday world. It was the first direct word of a year. He had not avoided the dainty apartment in Central Park West which the Austins had leased the preceding autumn, but he had taken pains to learn the precise days and hours Katherine gave the social settlement, and he saw to it that their ways did

not cross. Now, by her seeking, they were to meet. He puzzled over her motive an instant; then called himself a fool. What possible tie but their business relation bound them?

He left his car at a point where the city's gin-mills and low theatres seemed to cluster thickest, and struck in among the squalid warrens of the very poor. It was a city within a city, this region; a bizarre exotic growth. Its dirt, its huckstering, its teeming life, were those of a foreign ghetto; the gay placards in the little shops were rarely English; the dress of the people was strange; the speech of the street a babel of alien tongues. Drew had rather more than an academic interest in the civic problem this thing presented, but as a sheer physical fact he found it utterly distasteful, and to gain the Settlement House with its cleanliness, its cheer, its decorative appeal to the cultivated sense, brought profound relief.

His ring failing of a response, he followed the lead of two or three urchins who were entering with an air of proprietorship, and so quested along the hall in the hope of meeting some one in authority. In a sunny room at the end of the passage he ran upon a kindergarten of most amazing lung power, but the collective infantile

stare of the circle abashed him and he beat an ignominious retreat. A bright-faced Italian boy whom he accosted replied, "Sure, boss," when he asked him if he knew Miss Wentworth, and volunteered to guide him upstairs to a mysterious "club" where he said she was to be found. On an upper floor they turned into an unoccupied billiard room which opened into yet other rooms at whose remote end he could see Katherine in the midst of a score of wide-awake boys of twelve or more years. The Italian youngster was for calling her, but Drew abruptly closed their relations with a tip, and unseen sat down to wait.

He could not precisely make out what the club was about, but its members clearly deemed its affairs of prime importance. He was rather bewildered to find it conducted in parliamentary form. "Mr. President," whom all, not excepting Katherine herself, always rose punctiliously to address, was an Irish lad with an obvious future in his ward. In fact Drew was inclined to view it all as an incipient political machine. He was struck with the way Katherine's tact made for courtesy and quickened the boy instinct for fair play. The meeting reached its decorous adjournment, and the club was whooping down the stairs before she saw that he had been a witness.

"Yes, I listened," he admitted. "You worked wonders with your street arabs."

"Oh, but Harriet had that club before me," she owned frankly. "When she took hold, they were regular little muckers. They stole her pocket-book, blew out the gas, broke the furniture, — in fact played rough-house generally till anybody else would have pitched them downstairs."

"It takes a linguist too, I see."

"Oh, the slang?" she laughed. "Well, it helps. I did not mean that my message should bring you here," she went on. "I waited at your office as long as I could."

"If you had written or telephoned, I would have met you."

"I went on the spur of the moment. I was worried."

"But the bulk of your property is now secure from market fluctuations," he reassured. "Nothing is amiss. I meant to ask the admiral to tell you not to let these panic times make you uneasy."

"It was not for that — Philip."

It tugged at his heartstrings to hear his name from her lips again.

"What then, Katherine?"

"It's about the Washington property — those lots you said you could sell."

"Said we could sell!" he came back at her quickly. "Why, we closed that matter long ago. The admiral took the papers to you early last spring. The other people seemed quite as anxious to make the trade as we were. It's a lucky thing we unloaded before the hard times fairly set in. You can't even give away unimproved real estate these days."

She heard him through quietly.

"Philip," she accused, "you bought those miserable lots yourself."

Drew blushed to the hair.

"What are you talking about, Katherine?" he blustered. "You must have read the deeds you signed. Ask the admiral who it was bought the land."

"You hoodwinked uncle, too. Even now he doesn't guess that those other people were merely go-betweens. I was a foolish woman not to see it, but somehow I saw nothing clearly then. It was afterward that it puzzled and worried me, and I could not rest till I got to the bottom of the mystery. I learned the full truth only this morning. You bought that wretched land yourself, Philip. You bought it to save 'The Beeches' for me. And you did it at a time when I —"

"Let me explain —"

"You can't explain away your ownership. I know it for a fact, and I must undo the wrong. At a time when every dollar counts you are saddled with those worthless acres — "

"Worthless!" Drew was seized with what he took to be a brilliant inspiration. "Just let me say a word before you invest a plain business transaction with any further romance. I'll admit that I decided to take over the property myself. You could not afford to wait for a rise in values. I can. When the street railway overtakes that section, I shall be the one to talk of restitution."

Katherine's expression changed. Doubt, relief, and a feeling akin to disappointment were by turns uppermost.

"Oh," she said finally, and the little word epitomized many things.

Drew gave his improvisation another touch.

"I've had some experience with street railways," he reminded.

"And there will be an extension?"

"Of course there will." To himself he scrupulously added, "Even if I have to build it."

He did himself an ill turn by his chivalry. With his own hands he upraised the barrier which had fallen before Katherine's discovery of the morning. The eager confession of her

injustice froze upon her lips. This, too, at a moment when to be near her, meet her eyes, hear her voice, note her shifting color as he had delighted to watch it in the happier time, fed the hunger of a year. He tried to be all discretion as, by one pretext and another, he eked out his stay, and succeeded till almost the last, when she came with him to the head of the stair.

"This is not your place, Katherine," he said abruptly. "This is not your work."

"It is work, though."

"Which others could do better. Let the trained troops fight the slum."

"There are fewer than you think to lend a hand."

"There are fewer still able to do what you might elsewhere. Why lavish upon these ragamuffins a social gift which — ah, well," he cut himself off, "it's your affair, not mine."

The woman found no rejoinder. She knew far better than he that this was not her work, and if, in that moment of blunt candor, Drew had laid a masterful hand upon hers and said, "Come," she would have followed.

The incident had its echoes. In the hurried days of his anxious spring Drew chanced upon one or two quiet hours with that facile confidante,

Dick's wife, to whom he voiced his vigorous disapproval of Katherine's exile, together with some unwitting revelations personal to himself. As Katherine on her part had already made significant references to Drew's call in her letters, Harriet conceived and began to indulge the hope of a reconciliation. It was little more than a day-dream with her while spring sped into summer, but to dream was to scheme, and on Dick's mentioning one August morning that Drew would be in town the next Sunday, behold! a full-ripened plot hung temptingly at hand.

"I want you to ask Philip up here Sunday evening, Dick," she announced, debating meanwhile whether she should admit him to the full privileges of a fellow-conspirator. "Tell him I'll have the salad just as he likes it."

"Of course we'll have fazzer's uncle up to see ums, won't we, buster?" gurgled Dick, over the crib of his offspring.

For the moment his usefulness as a conspirator was problematic. Dick in his paternal rôle was, as Drew observed, Dick at his Dickiest. Before the twins were a week old he had settled their careers. The boy was to go to Yale and captain the Eleven — his father knew by his legs, he said, that he would make a superb left end; while the

girl was to dazzle the world with her soprano voice and bring princes to her feet.

"Katherine will be here, to be sure," Harriet pursued casually. "It's this week, you know, she has promised us. But they're beginning to meet now without restraint — "

"I tell you," Dick broke in, "that baby's intelligence is something marvellous. Just see how she looks at you while you talk!"

"I wish you would follow her example."

"Heard every word. You said Katherine would meet Philip here, and — thunder! That can't be right?"

Harriet reconstructed her ruse with infinite patience.

"We seldom get the chance to entertain Philip," she urged, "and I've quite set my heart on his coming. Katherine's being here won't matter in the slightest. As I tried to tell you just now, they see one another occasionally, and — "

"And the brazen fact is you are trying to patch things up between that balky pair. Own up."

"Well, then, I am. Moreover, you're going to help. It will be your business to get him up here without his suspecting whom he is to meet."

"Oh, I could corral him, but if it's only for another singeing—"

"Dick, she's a different Katherine!"

A bedtime talk between the girls Saturday night left Harriet in high conceit with her plans.

"I know it will turn out beautifully, Dick," she announced, coming back to him with pink cheeks toward midnight. "She let fall the most significant things."

"For instance?" demanded her husband, sleepily.

"Well," considered Harriet, "she alluded consciously to a call he made at the Settlement."

Dick roused himself sufficiently for a sceptical smile.

"Next?" he invited.

"Later she said that the work had taught her the tremendous value of human love!"

"Swashing arguments for a reconciliation those!"

"And besides," ended Harriet, delivering her prime reason last, "she's looking perfectly lovely."

Further energy was reserved for Katherine herself. Dick's artfully casual breakfast-table allusion to Drew's presence in the city, and Harriet's

spontaneous recollection of his passion for chicken salad made after her own particular recipe, fell short somehow of their expected effect, and before the day was much older resort was taken to a "pretty widow" measure which Harriet had meant to use only in extreme need.

"I didn't go outside the truth one jot," she defended her course. "Philip has said that our next-door neighbor is fascinating. I asked him once if he didn't think so. And he has paid her some little attentions."

"Also by your asking," grinned Dick. "Took her in to dinner, didn't he, or something equally romantic?"

"I kept to the facts. Katherine's interpretation of them is her own affair."

"What's the result? Any outward and visible sign?"

Harriet smiled triumphantly.

"Indeed there is. Katherine is to wear a cream-colored crêpe de chine which was always Philip's favorite. And that reminds me! I want you to slip out by and by and bring her home some violets if you have to ransack every florist's in town."

Dick's superior smile indicated the line of comment he was not permitted to ventilate.

"When are we to expect Philip?" she asked abruptly.

"I'm to stop by the Valley Club for him at five o'clock."

"You didn't let him dream of Katherine's being with us?"

"After all you've said? We had plenty else to talk about."

"The twins, I presume."

Dick blushed guiltily.

"I did mention them, I believe."

"You'll be shunned as a public nuisance soon," said Harriet.

She bundled him off to fetch Drew long before it was necessary, and herself served as Katherine's tire-woman for the last touches of the toilet which was to work such magic in the masculine memory. Neither girl said much during these rites, but the air was electric with sympathy, and Harriet kissed Katherine effusively before they passed down into the cool obscurity of the living room to await the coming guest.

It seemed centuries to the young wife before she distinguished her husband's step without, and, with a delicious return of the thrill which had glorified her own romance, sprang to play the hostess at the door.

At the threshold her vivacity drooped.

"Alone, Dick!" she exclaimed.

"Yes," he said gloomily.

"But he promised this morning—" Harriet's vexed tears surcharged eyes and voice.

"He left a note saying that he'd been called out of town."

"I don't believe a word of it! I think—Dick!"

Harris met her eyes reluctantly.

"Well?"

"I know you said something—let something slip out."

"That's just what I'm afraid I did do," her husband acknowledged miserably. "In fact I seem now to remember that in telling him how the twins—"

Harriet left him floundering and turned dejectedly within. There was a faint perfume of violets near the newel-post. From an upper landing fell the retreating murmur of crêpe de chine.

CHAPTER XXX

THE little household's several opinions, expressed or repressed, did the absentee scant justice. Dick's unguarded admissions had wrought no mischief, since a chance encounter with Mrs. Austin in New York had prepared Drew for a meeting which till a quarter before two o'clock he saw no reason to avoid. Politics, not pique, had wrecked Harriet's hopes.

Alarming news had reached Drew. Some time ago Maddox, by dint of a union for mutual profit with his neighbors across Brooklyn Bridge, a deal with the less reputable wing of the party which had achieved the whip-hand near Lake Erie, and through minor alliances with guerilla movements everywhere, had come into control of half the state committee. Drew's casting vote as chairman alone decided his supremacy, and now, on the very eve of a meeting, one of his supporters was said to have trumped up some errand beyond the Mississippi.

Monday, and the Job's comforters who fore-

gathered at the Madison Square headquarters brought no gleam of encouragement. After endless telegrams, the runaway was located and wired his "personal business" excuse, with vague allusions to a proxy, which further telegraphing had failed to explain when Tuesday dawned and the crisis was at hand. Drew steeled himself to meet the unknown as he entered the room where the committeemen awaited his coming with the eager expectancy of play-goers assembled for some much-heralded first performance. His eye never wavered when in a far corner he distinguished Maddox's saturnine face, and it was told of him admiringly that his nerve was unshaken in the yet more trying moment when the roll-call reached the missing man's name and Maddox coolly declared himself his proxy.

The room was at high tension thenceforward. The undercurrent of gossip and chaffing which the earlier stages of the roll-call had not wholly checked now ceased utterly. Men pulled automatically at their cigars or let them smoulder unnoticed. Every eye save Maddox's was on the chairman. Somehow and somewhere in this meeting the long-bruited trial of strength was plainly to ensue. The wait was not prolonged. The gathering had but one definite object, and a

Drew man got promptly to his feet with a resolution that the state convention be held in Saratoga Springs on September thirtieth. He was a capable speaker, and in the space of a minute or two had succinctly put the argument for fixing a late date.

"As for Saratoga," he ended, "I dare say we're all agreed that something more than chance has made it a political clearing-house for both great parties."

He sat down.

"Mr. Chairman," came a gentle appeal for recognition.

Halfway down the room Drew beheld his antagonist standing, with a slip of paper in his hand.

"Mr. Maddox," he said.

"I've a substitute to offer."

A hushed audience waited for Maddox to don a pair of glasses after this statement. His every movement was deliberate: the polishing of the lenses, the adjustment to his heavy nose, the unfolding of his memorandum. Then, in his deep, mild voice, he slowly read a resolution that the convention should meet in the city of Two Rivers on the seventeenth day of September, and vouchsafing no reasons for his action, calmly folded his paper, removed his glasses, and took his seat.

There was a prolonged silence. Maddox's curious choice of Drew's own home in a patently hostile move nonplussed his opponents. The upstate men sat in grave wonder. The Brooklyn and Manhattan committeemen exchanged knowing smiles. No one stirred to interfere. The battle of the giants was on. Maddox had thrown down the glove; it was for no lesser man than Drew to accept the gauge.

Drew did not hesitate. The sop to his pride in his city went for nothing; the assault upon his personal leadership seemed a trivial thing; the evil which this tactical blunder might do the party was paramount. As deliberate as Maddox in the beginning, his words came at last with a passionate, hurrying force.

"No convention city may claim me for its boomer," he said; "my own city least of all. Let it be Saratoga or Two Rivers as you will. It is against the suicidal folly of calling the convention together in the middle of September that I protest. If ever we needed a short, sharp campaign, it is in this year of panic, strikes, and financial disaster. Ours is not the offensive, but the defensive position. Did the spring elections, with town after town lost to us, convey no warning? Does all that out-of-season activity of the enemy

count for naught? Is it of no significance that they believe they could elect a yellow dog governor this fall? Wait upon their convention, gentlemen. Wait upon their platform, their nominations. Let us profit by their mistakes, not expose our own for campaign capital. We have nothing to lose by such a policy; we may gain everything. Wait, I say, wait."

One or two of his adherents plucked up spirit to add a word. The hostile cohorts held their smirking peace.

"We might vote by way of variety," Maddox himself at length remarked with unsmiling jocularity.

Drew stolidly took the ballot which he knew meant humiliation.

"It seems to be Two Rivers and the seventeenth," he announced calmly.

"Move we 'journ!" shouted a New York member, with a swift second from Brooklyn; and an instant later the victors flocked forth into the expectant corridors to spread the news.

According to the newspaper extras the price of the missing committeeman's absence was a block of congressional delegates which Maddox had contracted with an up-state chairman to deliver, but Drew did not greatly concern himself with

explanations. The vital point was voiced by the cry of the newsboys beneath his windows: —

"MADDOX IS BOSS! MADDOX IS BOSS!"

Yet while his followers were blatantly proclaiming that he would control the next state committee and dictate the convention's slate, Maddox himself laid no claim to the titular leadership by reason of his triumph. He was quoted as saying that party success, not this or that man's supremacy, was the foremost consideration; and indeed lent his name to a specious harmony movement which during early September some of the party organs set afoot. It was a sham hardly worth the enemy's trouble to expose, for all over the state resounded its boisterous refutation as Maddox men clashed with Drew men over the choice of delegates. It was a wearing struggle, and when Drew entered the *Post-Messenger* office the afternoon before the convention met, Harris told him that he looked like a ghost.

"Stretch yourself on the lounge here," Dick entreated, jumping up to sweep a mass of reference books to the floor. "You need a rest."

"I came partly for that," Drew answered, declining the lounge and dropping wearily into a chair by a window. "Nobody knows I'm

here except McQuade, who has a report to make."

"Your Algonquin House headquarters are mobbed, I suppose?"

"Yes. And it's little better at the office."

"Nor at the Valley Club. Don't go there to rest. While I lunched, at least a dozen men asked me where to find you. Better send your traps up to the house. It's all quiet along the Potomac there after taps. The twins are like mice. Why, the other night—"

Drew laughed as the parent checked himself.

"Don't suppress it," he said. "A baby story will seem idyllic after what I've been through to-day."

"No, sir," Dick declined firmly. "It's a daisy, but I won't tell it. I promised Harriet I'd quit."

Drew bade him go on with his work, and for twenty minutes Dick's pen scratched industriously. He was coatless, collarless, and his hair was rumpled. An electric fan purred ineffectually at elbow; in the main office just without the reporters were banging out their afternoon copy on the typewriters; from the press-room door belched intermittent gusts of hot air reeking of machine oil and printer's ink.

Presently McQuade tapped, and with a "Howdy, Mister Editor" crossed to his chief.

"It's all right," he said sententiously.

Drew nodded his complete comprehension, and without further parley they turned to watch the unwonted throngs which the convention had already drawn to the city's streets.

Dick presently left his desk and joined them.

"Philip, what was Maddox's motive in sending the convention here?" he queried. "We're not central, our hotels can't begin to accommodate the crowd, and our music hall is a barn. What's the nigger in the fence, anyhow?"

"A bit of a clairvoyant, eh?" Drew smiled over at McQuade.

"Now if he'd only read th' old skeezick's mind, too!" suggested the Irishman.

"The fact is, Dick, we're rather exercised about that colored person ourselves," Drew admitted. "Whatever Maddox's motive, we're trying to keep our eyes open. Such advantage as it gives us we've taken. Larry here has just made sure that their claqueurs won't fill all the gallery space."

"They're coming a thousand strong, I hear."

"Twelve hundred's th' latest tally of th' chair-warmers," corrected McQuade. "Two train loads of 'em."

A cheer from down the street crackled nearer

and louder with a drumming accompaniment of hoofs.

"They've arrived," Dick said, glancing at his watch. "Their first special was due long ago."

McQuade craned underneath the awnings.

"It's King Maddox himself, bowin' right an' left like a conqueror!" he called. "Hear them poor galoots cheer!"

Maddox whipped past, girt about by a flashing cordon of mounted police. Then the street crowd forgot him at the first strains of a distant band which heralded his host. On they came with military precision, rank on rank, company on company, the badges of their clan glittering in the autumn sunshine, pride of the flesh in their carriage, jovial bravado in every step.

"They're a fine lot of bums t' dictate t' decent people," McQuade cried angrily, as the last rank passed and the crowd closed in to follow. "Not an honest face in th' pack."

"Yes there is, Larry," Drew gravely contradicted, making ready to go. "I saw many an honest face, and honest men behind them, too. It's workers, not loafers, Maddox wants. I could have pointed out lawyers, bankers, business men, respectability of all sorts. It is just that which makes Maddoxism so hard to down."

There was nothing spectacular in the night's happenings, but two things transpired which appealed to the popular craving for dramatic events. Drew and Maddox were brought together in a brief talk over candidates; and the state committee — whose meeting neither great leader attended — named a friend of Drew's for temporary chairman of the convention. Harris looked in at the Algonquin House after his paper went to press and found McQuade full in the swing of his annual fever.

"They're learnin' who's who, them thugs," he said, clapping Dick heavily on the shoulder. "Old Maddox is up with th' white flag. 'Harmony' he says. Rot! He's scared. 'Twas him asked f'r a conf'rence."

"Is there any chance of seeing Philip? If I could take him home with me, he'd get a little sleep."

"Sleep! Come, an' I'll show you an edifyin' sight."

They squeezed into an elevator and debouched upon a second floor amidst an even denser throng than that which packed the lobby below.

"Sleep, I b'lieve you was sayin'," McQuade went on. "Not if this push knows it! Phil is located in 213, — bad number that, come t'

think, — an' King Maddox's throne room is two doors beyond with Lord Redfern guardin' th' august presence."

"Then Redfern's here, after all?"

"Blew in not ten minutes ago. Yet th' administration ain't interferin'!"

Dick lingered downstairs an interval, mingling with the crowd. It was unlike any convention talk he had known. Candidates were unseen and seldom mentioned. One would scarcely have gathered that a gubernatorial nomination was to be made. Governor Scott had long since prudently discovered that his personal affairs would compel him to decline a renomination, and no one had been eager to take his place. For once the office sought the man. The whole excited, feverish, often bitter debate was of the fight between rival leaders, — the stern grapple for mastery between Maddox and Drew.

"I tell you Maddox has the delegates — "

"Watch Drew fool him! See how the state committee came round — "

"Poppycock, old man, listen — "

"Bet you fifty he'll write the platform — "

"Maddox will bag the new state committee — nominate his slate — "

"This house-cleaning simply had to come. Our up-state folks won't tolerate — "

Harris did not see his uncle again till noon on the morrow when Drew came slowly down the rostrum of the music hall to call the convention to order in a brief session which the spectators thought exasperatingly tame. There was no clash between the leaders. Maddox did not even present himself, while Drew, his formal duty ended, quickly disappeared. The temporary chairman's speech aroused far less interest than the roll-call which at least gave the galleries a chance to cheer more popular names than the governor's and the President's. An adjournment followed hard upon the usual appointment of committees, and the crowd poured out to swirl and eddy near the closed doors behind which the chosen few were waging the committee-room battles on which the sage declared the issue really hung.

One door above all others riveted the gaze of the bystanders. It admitted to the Algonquin House ball-room which contained the committee on credentials, now busily threshing out the claims of rival delegations. A troop of lawyers guarded the interests of Maddox whose whereabouts were uncertain. Drew was present to care for his own. It was past five o'clock when the ball-room emptied upon the already jammed corridor and the sensational news of the committee's decision leaped

from man to man and coursed from lobby to street. Dick got wind of it as he quitted his desk to go to dinner, and hurried to the Algonquin for confirmation if possible at the lips of Drew himself. The tumult of last night was tranquillity beside the pandemonium of to-night. The clamor of fatuous angry dispute assailed his hearing at the threshold; taunt met taunt, oath clashed oath, recrimination followed recrimination. The space about the elevator was a welter of red-faced, ill-tempered humanity, and as he struggled up the staircase he glimpsed men in whom liquor had raised the beast, shaking their fists in one another's eyes.

The outer room of Drew's suite was crowded to suffocation, but Dick wriggled in course of time to the door of the inner chamber where McQuade kept burly guard, and, at a fortunate moment when a caller left, caught Drew's eye and slipped within.

"Tell me it's true, Philip!" he exclaimed, wringing his hand. "Tell me that you've downed Maddox single-handed as they're saying!"

"The committee on credentials seated our men."

"And the new state committee is yours? You've saved your leadership?"

"We've a safe margin."

Dick fell upon him with an ex-foot-ball-player's hug.

"I couldn't go home to Harriet and the babies till I'd seen you."

"Thanks, boy."

"Harriet has worried herself half sick over the rot the papers have been printing. She wanted to go to the convention this morning, but I dissuaded her. I didn't know what might happen. But it's all right now. I'll take her up to-morrow and show her the animals. McQuade's reserving the right-hand stage box for us. Say, Philip, you are coming home to dinner with me! Pot-luck with Harriet will beat the Algonquin or Valley Club any day. You've got to come, that's all. Wouldn't you rather dine with us than with a lot of rural politicians?"

"Wouldn't I!" Drew laughed. "But you can see with half an eye that it's impossible. Don't think that this thing is over yet. There are some nominations to be made."

Dick refused to take this cold water seriously.

"But you *have* whipped Maddox," he insisted. "He's yielded all along the line. You had your man made temporary chairman, and everybody says you framed the platform. Now you've

capped the climax by scooping the state committee. It's been a walk-over."

"That's the drawback. It's been too easy."

"Easy," scoffed the young fellow, instantly ready to argue against himself. "What bosh! You've worked early and late since Maddox gave you a fall in August. It has meant the dogged work of weeks to convince those up-state delegates to back you in this fight in which they ought to have seen in a jiffy that they've more at stake than you."

The jaded man looked at his watch.

"I must put you out now," he said. "Commend me to Mrs. Dick and the twins. Perhaps I'll come and see you to-morrow night when it's all over."

"We'll hold you to that. So long — Boss Drew!"

CHAPTER XXXI

PERHAPS an hour later Katherine issued from the Settlement House in New York and lingered on the doorstep for the night breeze from the river which was ridding the street of the fetid odors of the day. The push-cart venders still lined either curb with their gay-colored wares, slatternly women gossiped from tenement to tenement, and from a third-story window of the rookery opposite a maudlin figure tried solemnly to arbitrate a dispute on the pavement. A hurdy-gurdy, with a mandolin attachment and a wealth of trills, triumphed over all competing sounds.

On the nethermost step below her was the Irish lad whose activity in his particular club had seemed to Drew to stamp him as a coming power in his ward. His face was buried in the still damp sheets of a convention extra whose huge head-line Katherine could have read across the street: —

DREW IN THE SADDLE!

As the caption met her eye, she darted down the flight.

"May I read too, Dan?" she asked, sitting down beside him.

"Sure, Miss Wentworth," he said. "Gee, but I wish 't I wuz a dellygate t' dis scrap!"

The head-line and a paragraph of lesser type outlining Drew's committee achievements really exhausted the special's latest news, but there was a padding of earlier convention gossip and descriptive matter which Dan and the girl beside him devoured to the last morsel.

"I s'pose ole Drew t'inks he's a wise guy," commented the boy, "but I'm on to a t'ing or two. T'morrer he'll get it w'ere Sadie wore her beads — right in de neck."

Katherine threw him a quick look.

"Why do you think Drew will get it in the neck to-morrow, Dan?" she asked, adapting herself to his vernacular.

"Oh, I'm on," he boasted mysteriously. "I put me fadder next an' he tol' me t' shut me trap. Me fadder he says it'd queer de game if any ov de Drew push tumbled."

Dan's listener caught her breath.

"I wish I were next," she declared with a beguiling smile. "I like politics."

"So, Miss Wentworth?"

"Heaps."

Dan spat with sure marksmanship at a banana skin near the curb.

"D'jever hear ov wot dey calls a stampede?"

"A stampede? Yes."

"Well, de poipers'll tell youse all about one t'morrer. On de level, Miss Wentworth! Ole Maddox has got it fixed wid some ov de hayseeds t' make dat gazabo Drew run f'r gov'n'r himself, an' I guess dat'll finish him."

"Dan!"

"I t'ought I'd make youse set up," said the gamin, importantly.

Katherine shivered in her excitement, but she acted a careless scepticism.

"Did you get your news by private wire?" she laughed nervously. "Perhaps Mr. Maddox himself sent you word."

Dan drew himself up.

"It wuz a priwate wire all right," he answered loftily; "but I guess wot District-leader O'Hara says goes. See! I got it off him, so I did. D'y' know de White Elephant saloon, Miss Wentworth?"

"Yes, yes," Katherine assented; "four blocks down the street. I know the place."

"Dat's one ov O'Hara's joints, an' dat's w'ere I got wise one night w'en me fadder chased me

over f'r a pint ov suds. O'Hara didn't know de door t' de back room was open w'en de barkeep wuz a-drawin' me beer, an' you c'n guess Little Willie wuzn't sayin' not'in' neither."

To Dan's bewilderment his friend flew suddenly up the steps, and as suddenly stopped in a brown study before the knocker at which she stared as if it were perhaps a Russian Jew's old candlestick or copper pot, objects that he had noted were of interest to these unaccountable ladies of the Settlement.

Drew must be warned! This O'Hara was as close to Maddox as any leader in the whole city, and Dan's narrative had every mark of truth. Should she telegraph? Then a chance saying of Drew's about the unwisdom of political telegrams set her thoughts racing to the cipher code they had once employed, only to remember that she had long since mislaid the key. She must go to him herself, and that swiftly.

Hurrying within, she mounted the stair and tapped at the head worker's door.

"I find I must go to-night," she announced, "and it must be at once."

The lady addressed waved a letter.

"Look!" she said. "We'll not be short-handed. It was unselfish of you to overstay."

Again in the street Katherine hurried to the nearest cab-stand, and presently whirled northward to the apartment in Central Park West. The Austins were out of the city, and she could take counsel with no one save herself, but she made her hurried preparations for departure with a buoyant self-reliance which welled straight from her woman's heart.

She found that there was no through train before midnight, and as she waited in the station till she might board her sleeping-car, she bought the later editions of the evening papers and read the story of Drew's day of battle, whose triumphs, if she failed him, to-morrow would put at naught. The fear lest she be too late rode the dreams of her broken sleep and became a torment by day, when she woke to find her train at a standstill because of a washout, and a third of her journey yet before.

The rain fell incessantly in the rocky gorge without, as the minutes became an hour. The convention, she had read, would reassemble at noon. It was now eight o'clock, and her destination lay two hours away, with what further obstacles between herself and Drew at the very end she could only guess. Even if the wheels moved instantly, there would be scant time, and

the train lay inert. She must telegraph, after all.

Her ring brought a porter.

"I must send a telegram," she told him.

"We're fo' mile from a station," the man answered.

"Then I must send to that station. Perhaps the conductor will let the engine run ahead with my message?"

"It's back, not ahead."

"Then a hand-car?"

The darkey could only spread his hands in helpless amaze at this madwoman who would make free with the engine and thought hand-cars dropped from the clouds. As he pondered, open-mouthed, the distant locomotive barked twice or thrice in quick succession, and the train began to creep slowly on.

"Thank God!" said the madwoman, falling back in her seat. "Thank God!"

For miles they seemed merely to crawl. Then the train left the river-bed and danger, and darted forward through the level plateau of farm land whose far boundary was that other valley and her journey's end. She was plagued afresh with thoughts of the delays and restrictions which might hedge about or even thwart a meeting with

Drew; and at the first stop she wired Harris an urgent appeal to meet her belated train. The land became more broken now with little streams tributary to the greater waters beyond. Then came a glimpse of the misty hills which hemmed the city, a gleam of river, and at last, as the train half circled the vast bowl of the valley which the commingling waters had fashioned in some primal age, the roofs, the spires, the shipping, of her destination. The minute-hand of her watch stood nearer eleven o'clock than ten as the train steamed beside the platform, and a puzzled yet as always capable Dick ran forward and helped her alight.

"A cab, street car — anything!" she exclaimed.

"My own dog-cart is just around the corner. The trunks — "

"Can wait. I must see Philip at once, Dick. There's not a second to lose."

Dick popped her into his vehicle with the swiftness of the Slave of the Lamp, whose reserve also he emulated as they tore down the deep-shaded avenues toward the Algonquin House. His mind was one lively conjecture, but he respected Katherine's silence. A glance at her face had convinced him of her errand's weight.

"Philip is here, or was here not an hour ago,"

he announced, suddenly pulling up at the hotel's side entrance and giving over his reins to a boy at the curb. "We'd better climb the rear staircase. The elevator in front is packed like a cattle-pen."

Katherine dropped her veil as they came upon the press of the upper corridor, and braved a fire of masculine scrutiny while Dick left her in the least crowded spot till he could go forward and pave the way. He reappeared after what seemed an eternity, and led her through yet another gantlet of eyes to a door which admitted directly to Drew's inner room. A bolt was shot at her knock, and alone she passed within.

The man took her hand with a look of anxiety which no thought of Maddox had been able to imprint.

"Do you need me, Katherine?" he demanded. "Are you in trouble?"

She plunged breathlessly into her story, and, even as she spoke, Drew's mind leaped ahead, supplying details, bridging the unexplained, piecing out the whole diabolic plan to undo him. For long months his enemies had plotted this master-stroke. It was for this that they had sent the convention here. His own neighbors, his lifelong friends, were to be seduced to kill him

with supposed kindness. What were his easy successes of yesterday beside Maddox's crushing retaliation of to-day! The girl saw his face ashen, and as she ended he answered nothing, but groped in a blind way for the back of a chair and leaned upon it heavily.

"Thanks, Katherine girl," he said finally, turning upon her with a haggard smile.

She waited in momentary expectation of seeing him rally, but his old-time energy seemed to have left him. He could not rebound. His aspect was that of a resourceless, beaten man. Katherine stifled a cry of dismay, and caught his listless fingers in her own.

"Courage, Philip, courage," she appealed.

Drew shook his head.

"It's too late to head it off," he replied. "I can't prevent it now."

"But you can face it — face it like your old undaunted self! Take them at their mocking word when they act to-day. Accept their nomination —"

"They can't force me to take it," he flamed. "They may nominate me, but they can't force me to accept. They shall not!"

"Philip, *you must!* It's the one way out. You must face them unruffled and rob their tri-

umph of its sweetness. You must tell the sneering crew that you accept, and do it with a smile. Tell them that as theirs is the responsibility to-day, so will the party look to them and hold them accountable in November. Do you think they'll dare play you false? It is Maddox's pride to roll up his big city majorities for the state ticket, and he'll do it for you. It's the state at large he counts upon to defeat you, and it's the state I believe you can win. Begin the campaign to-day, Philip, and fight, fight — fight till you drop!"

"You speak as if—" Drew paused as the hand in his trembled. "Katherine!"

"Yes, this is my battle too," she avowed swiftly. "I would have you go forth as the man I love above all the world should go — as my chosen husband should go."

McQuade bolted in from the anteroom, blundering upon them with an embarrassment far greater than their own.

"Excuse me f'r intherruptin' your pressin' business," he said, "but th' convention's due in forty-five minutes and here's forty-'leven statesmen as says they must speak with ye b'fore."

"There's just time to get a little lunch with Harriet," Dick announced as he piloted Katherine outdoors. "But, Holy Smoke!" he exclaimed,

halting in his tracks. "Have you even had breakfast? I've just remembered that your train doesn't carry so much as a buffet."

Katherine turned upon him a shining pair of eyes.

"Breakfast?" she said. "I forget."

CHAPTER XXXII

THE convention was wheedling an encore from a band in the balcony when Dick brought his wife and Katherine into their box. The floor of the music hall was already crowded with delegates and the stage was filling with officials and prominent guests. Dick got instant recognition along the untidy tables of the press which choked all the orchestra space, and one or two of his fellow-workers made jocular pantomime of devoting long paragraphs to his distinguished presence.

"But they'll not?" Harriet asked anxiously as her husband interpreted.

"I couldn't say," Dick teased, his news-gathering eye taking in the scene from the topmost gallery to the confusion of the pit. "Our arrival is certainly making a sensation. Can it be, though," he went on, "that this stir is really caused by James Y. Redfern?"

The cheers which hailed the orator's majestic progress swelled abruptly to a deafening yell as the Manhattan delegation sighted the stocky fig-

ure following just behind, and a red-and-gold bandmaster with a Kaiser Wilhelm mustache, who had risked life and limb to peer over the balcony rail, began threshing madly with his baton.

"'The Star-Spangled Banner' for Maddox!" Dick ejaculated. "I wish McQuade's back wasn't turned. I'd like to see his expression."

The two girls intently studied the man who caused all this commotion as he walked phlegmatically to his seat in the great metropolitan delegation which massed the front and centre of the parquet.

"Why, he looks like a benevolent family doctor," cried Harriet.

"Did you expect horns and a tail?" Dick demanded. "I wonder if you notice how the feeling of this being a pitched battle between city and country affects even the applause? It's New York and Brooklyn making the bulk of the noise. Hello!" he added, "Redfern has taken a seat with the New York outfit. I guess the air of Lafayette County strikes him as too chilly."

"Where is the Lafayette delegation, Dick?" asked Katherine.

"Right under our box here."

"And will Philip sit with them?"

"He surely will," called a low voice from the curtained doorway in the rear of the box.

"Philip himself!" exclaimed Harriet, springing up. "He must have slipped in by the stage door."

As they crowded into the dusky little passage behind the portières to speak with him, Drew's glance fathomed Katherine's.

"Yes; tell them," she answered.

Dick broke into a laugh.

"If it's the fact that you children have kissed and made up," he said, "spare your breath."

His wife rebuked him with a pinch and slipped an arm around Katherine's waist.

Drew took punitive measures of another sort: —

"Maybe you've also guessed that Katherine could give the *Post-Messenger* the biggest convention 'beat' of this decade?"

The young fellow's news instinct was instantly on the alert.

"Katherine, you've a tip on the nominee," he exclaimed. "Give me a hint, the littlest hint."

"Not the lift of an eyelash, Katherine," Drew interdicted. "Let the clever young person guess."

The tattoo of the presiding officer's gavel sent them back to their chairs, and under cover of

the ensuing committee reports Drew passed out into the hall and tried to get himself quietly seated. The convention boisterously thwarted the attempt.

"DREW!" bayed a deep-voiced delegate, leaping to his feet in one of the side aisles. "Hip, hip, hurrah!"

The cry found a thousand echoes, and the red-and-gold bandmaster atoned for his apparent Maddox bias by most violent contortions as he brought forth "Hail to the Chief." All the jubilant triumph of the up-state men in their leader's tactical successes leaped to their throats in a mighty roar which was as much a defiance to Maddox as a welcome to Drew. Then the outburst received a singular reënforcement, which one of the little group in the right-hand stage box was the first to remark. Katherine's companions had their eyes fixed upon the man beneath who with a deprecating gesture tried to still the storm; but she, eagerly watching the convention, hit upon the discovery that the metropolitan delegates had begun cheering too, Maddox himself setting the example.

The applause flickered out as Drew summarily turned his back and sat down. The committee reports went briskly forward, and a large man who

rolled his r's lovingly did elocutionary justice to the strong planks of the platform. These formalities did not hold the audience, but everybody sat up when a delegate who was obviously somebody arose in his place and moved that the convention now proceed to the nomination of candidates for governor.

"Dick," petitioned Harriet, "who will it be?"

"Ask that famous politician at your elbow," Harris retorted with an air of injury, but as Katherine bore herself without offence, he delivered his opinion that the choice would fall upon some lukewarm up-state man who took a decided stand with neither faction. "Colonel Brown of Jefferson County is of that stripe," he said, "and last night developed more or less sentiment for Zimmerman of Wyoming. I hear also that Albany means to put forward Judge Howard, one of Spedding's old guard. None of them are anxious to lead a forlorn hope, but they would make the run and trust for their reward in some rosier hereafter."

Katherine turned at his last words.

"Do you really think it so hopeless, Dick?"

"They're simply casting lots for a sacrifice. To-day's nominee, in my opinion, will lead a funeral procession up Salt River. There are a dozen candidates for every place on the other

people's ticket, and they're already wondering whom they'll send to the United States Senate when the glad time rolls round."

"But the ringing platform they just read," Harriet put in, "and the confident speeches!"

"S-sh, you babe in the woods," Dick returned. "The roll-call's begun."

As the secretary called "Albany" one of Dick's predictions came true. A delegate placed Judge Howard in nomination, extolling his virtues in a prosy speech which, as one gallery auditor piercingly remarked, began at the Flood and skipped nothing to date of issue.

"I trust he'll wind up before the polls close," Dick yawned.

"There," exulted Harriet, "he's down."

The bored convention stretched itself and prepared for further eulogies of local prodigies.

"Allegany?" called the secretary.

"Allegany County yields its time to New York," sung out an embarrassed rural chairman whose eight-word speech seemed to choke him.

The flurry caused by this halting announcement bloomed a full-grown sensation as Redfern was seen to rise from his seat beside Maddox.

"Mr. Chairman," he began, his great voice enunciating every syllable, "by courtesy of

Allegany, by request of New York, and with, I venture to hope, the cordial assent of my own Lafayette, I have the honor to propose a name which the logic of events should spontaneously suggest to the mind of every delegate in this enlightened, this untrammelled, this unbossed convention."

Cries of "platform" interrupted him. Redfern declined to mount the rostrum, but he did stride to the makeshift steps which at the side toward Katherine's box gave access to the stage, and, standing halfway up the flight, paused while the weight of his showy personality worked its customary magic with the crowd. Then, suddenly flinging out his hand in a dramatic gesture toward the quiet figure immediately below, he cried:—

"There sits our choice! The man we cheered to the echo as he came among us — the idol of his party — the terror of his political foes — our logical nominee, Philip Drew!"

His words seemed to spring a hidden mine in the Manhattan delegation whose cheers fired their shouters of the galleries wherever seated, and then by sheer mob contagion swept group after group of up-state men into a frantic unreasoning delirium of acclaim.

"It's a stampede they're trying!" Dick shouted. "See Philip now!"

Katherine had been proudly seeing nothing save Philip since the tempest began. It was for this moment of supreme irony that Redfern had bided his time, but as he looked upon Drew his revenge lost its savor and he ceased to gloat. His victim was listening with an air of amused interest, his lips parted in a tantalizing smile. Where all else was tumult he was serene. Redfern's forehead knotted in a scowl.

"Our opponents say we are divided against ourselves," he bellowed at the first lull. "They point the derisive finger. They taunt us with factional strife. They distort our honest differences into civil war. They charge that either of our honored leaders would sink his party to perdition rather than abate one jot or tittle of his personal ambition. Gentlemen of the convention, I adjure you fling this slander in their teeth. Make such an answer here to-day as shall witness our unity and bring their gibes to confusion. Give them the lie — the absolute, downright, defiant lie! Name Philip Drew!"

For a long moment, while the convention thundered its delight, he held out his hands to Drew in a mute apostrophe which that gentleman

greeted with the same cheerful attention he might bestow upon a diverting comedian. When relative quiet came Drew requested a hearing, but the conspirators had taken care that the permanent chairman should be of their choosing, and this bland personage bade the secretary proceed with the calling of the roll.

"Broome?" shouted that official.

"Broome County seconds the nomination of Philip Drew," plumped out an excited county chairman whom most men supposed one of the stanchest anti-Maddox men in the state.

By this time Drew gained the platform, and presenting himself squarely before the chairman, compelled his reluctant notice.

"I appreciate the high compliment some of you would pay me," he stated simply, when they hushed to listen, "but this use of my name is wholly unauthorized. I am a candidate for no office to which this convention has power to nominate. Thank you, gentlemen."

A swelling roar of dissent greeted his refusal, and as he descended men surged forward to plead with him, jostling the press tables and storming the platform steps.

"The secretary will continue the roll-call," directed the unruffled chairman.

"Cattaraugus?"

"Cattaraugus is for Drew," came the answer.

"Cayuga?"

"Drew!"

"Chautauqua?"

"Drew!"

"Chemung?"

"Chemung is for Drew and harmony!" a delegate varied the fast stereotyping formula and leaped to a dizzy newspaper eminence forthwith.

When, in due course, the heavy reënforcements from Erie and Kings swung into line, the convention knew the certain issue of the roll-call and surrendered itself to the mental debauch of the stampede. Maddox men and Drew men paraded the aisles with arms interlocked. The bandmaster, with the Kaiser Wilhelm mustache, hammered out something — nobody knew what. Canes, umbrellas, and head-gear filled the air; and in one of the upper proscenium boxes a stout female pillaged a flag from the decorations and shook it like a tablecloth over the rail.

In one quarter, however, a breathless tension prevailed. Almost within touch of Katherine's hand had Redfern fulmined and Drew been overwhelmed by plausible enemies and foolish friends. No word or look of Drew's escaped her, and

once, as he shook off his goading counsellors and passed to his seat, his eyes had met hers; but in some subtle, baffling way he seemed to move in a world apart. He was no longer simply her lover whom she had helped meet this crisis undismayed; he was the personage, the storm-centre of a scene of moment to the commonwealth, and there encompassed him the distinction of the historic. She knew that her father's presence had wrought precisely this spell upon thousands, though she herself had gone untouched; it thrilled, bewildered, and subdued her to find it potent in Philip Drew.

There were moments during the stampede when Maddox, roused from his usual apathy, wore the look of a man who unchains a force whose energy he has misprized; but as the last county chairman responded, he rose and, waiting till the crowd had howled itself to a speechless hysteria, deliberately moved that the convention signify its choice by acclamation. Then Albany, withdrawing its candidate, — whom every one had forgotten, — hurriedly seconded his proposal. A moment later the voice of the great throng swelled to its full diapason, and Philip Drew knew himself this enlightened, untrammelled, unbossed convention's nominee for the highest office in the state.

Then the great New York boss and his chuckling followers found themselves listening meekly to bewildering words from the man they had loaded with mock honors and elevated only to destroy. He had thanked the convention, accepting its decision, and was now confronting the metropolitan delegates, his eyes looking straight down into Maddox's.

"And one word to you, gentlemen of New York," he was saying. "The wisdom or unwisdom of this nomination is your own. I accept for the party this unsolicited overture for peace, and I assume to speak for the party when I say that the burden of proving our unity lies at your door. Make no mistake. We look to you to back up your promise with performance. To-day's work is your work. To-morrow's responsibility will be your responsibility."

There was absolute silence for the space of a dozen seconds. Then the convention surged wildly to its feet and hailed his audacity with cheer on cheer. It was another, a spontaneous, stampede.

CHAPTER XXXIII

DURING the calmer hours after the convention had completed its ticket and adjourned, doubters came to tell Drew that he had acted rashly. He laughed at these timid souls. His head no less than his heart proclaimed Katherine's saving counsel right. The time for compromise had passed. The appeal was to the people, and he had spoken out so that his every judge might hear.

"It was your speech, Katherine," he told her at nightfall in Dick's home. "Even if I lose the election, I shall have nothing to regret."

"You will win."

"I have won," he insisted, and claimed a victor's spoils.

"No, but the greater victory," she protested when she could. "Our love mustn't be a handicap, Philip. Perhaps, after all, it would be wiser to wait until—"

"Wait!" Drew ejaculated. "After you've wired the admiral, and I've seen the clergyman, and Dick has bought the ring, and Harriet's set-

tled the dress problem! No, no, my lady Will-and-Wont! You promised at the Algonquin that we'd fight this through shoulder to shoulder, and to-morrow they'll swear us in. There's no deserting now."

"I wouldn't if I could," she admitted. "I wonder, though," she added a little wistfully, "if I shall be the first woman to spend her honeymoon in a whirlwind campaign."

Drew's dramatic nomination, the swiftly ensuing news of his marriage, and his immediate return to New York where he undertook the management of his own canvass, cast upon him and his the glare of a publicity which respected neither time, place, nor person. He would have drawn a hard-and-fast line between his public and his private life had it been possible, but there was a growing number of men whom he must meet on a more social footing than the state chairman's room at headquarters, and it resulted that he and his wife seldom found themselves alone.

Katherine spared herself nothing to lighten Drew's task, spent herself as freely for the bores as the clever, and contrived to laugh when it would have often been easier to cry at the romancings of a press which paid her almost the honors of a candidate. She saw herself attributed

with incredible girlhood precocities; witticisms of her Washington days she had never coined; impossible hob-nobbings with royalty abroad, and an extraordinary list of conquests at home; besides numberless sayings, doings, gowns and millinery "creations" of the present hour which had all the freshness of complete novelty and the ring of inspired truth.

But her pathway was rose-strewn beside Drew's. In one of their rare moments of privacy he catalogued the ordeal of a single day.

"I have gone through a stack of personal mail a foot high," he said, "received five county chairmen and some twenty odd other callers, repudiated two bogus interviews and a silly defiance to Maddox, nailed a canard about that Albany affair of Dick's, harmonized an up-state quarrel, dodged a crank who said he was John the Baptist or Jonah, I forget which, and incidentally raised a few thousand dollars for the campaign fund. I think that's about all."

"Not quite," laughed his wife. "Both *Puck* and *Judge* have new cartoons, and one of the morning papers gave a frightful snap-shot picture of you addressing that business-men's meeting yesterday. Your mouth is open, and you're scowling horribly."

Drew smiled, but presently went grave.

"I must have been thinking of that strike up state," he said.

"You mean the worst one — the one where they dynamited a street car and the governor sent troops?"

"Yes; the Adirondack & Southwestern Traction Company trouble. It's politics which has kept that strike alive. The men have been led somehow to believe that if they hold out, I shall be frightened into begging their management to yield."

"You never told me that before!"

"I didn't want to worry you with mere suspicions; the facts have only just come to light. The strikers had a real grievance at the outset, poor devils, but they've put themselves in the wrong by their riots. They've thrown away their advantage by listening to agitators who are in Maddox's pay."

"In Maddox's pay! Are you sure?"

"Tolerably. We've had detectives on the ground. I'm sorry for the men. In all conscience isn't the portion of Labor heavy enough without the added yoke of the demagogue? This chicane has been carried on through politicians on the other side, but the trail leads home to Maddox. I tell you the man is at his wits' end

since the financial sky has begun to clear. He feels the tide setting our way. Why, Katherine, they flung ticker-tape from the windows in Wall Street yesterday when I drove through to that meeting! The curb brokers started the hurrah, and the office windows filled like magic. They've not had the heart for such fooling in months. But this is wormwood to Maddox. All the campaign rubbish about my being a railroad magnate and a trust promoter has been his meat and drink and this prolonged strike his chief resource."

"He's hoped it would spread to Lafayette County, of course?"

"Not only hoped, but worked. His agents have done their utmost to involve the Valley system. Our men have laughed at them. They know that they've had whiter treatment than any street-railway employees in the United States. That's something Maddox didn't take into account. Another thing he didn't know is that every car starter or other employee we've put in a position of influence has not only been a sound railway man, but a sound party man too."

His remark gave Katherine one of many glimpses into the bewildering maze of the party organization as he had perfected it. By comparison Spedding's chain of country editors and other

time-hallowed devices seemed a primitive mechanism indeed, and as she reflected that besides the faculty of organization, which had made him what he was, Drew had a tongue to persuade and a simple friendliness that won men's hearts — and, for that matter, women's hearts also! — she could brook no doubt of November's verdict.

This hope strengthened daily as during the last fortnight of all they whirled up and down the state by special train. Drew would have spared her this phase of which she could be little more than a spectator, but she reminded him that she had enlisted for the whole war and set about persuading Mrs. Austin to bear her company. Her aunt promised for a part of the journey, though the admiral could not be enticed, while Harriet agreed to intrust the twins to their maternal grandmother and join the campaigners for the last fevered week. One of Drew's stenographer's from headquarters, and the press correspondents, completed the regular party, to which were added transient county chairmen and state committeemen from place to place. To the man whose whole experience had been a school for this emergency, the journey's demands did not seem extraordinary, but to the small group watching him at close range Drew was a continual surprise. They

marvelled at his facile recollection of names and places, at his local allusions and apt retorts, at the signs of his popularity with the ever changing crowd, at his grip everywhere upon the younger men of the state, and, most of all, at the boundless energy which carried him all day through speeches from the train's rear platform and yet left him fresh for the elaborate mass-meetings at night.

When the last week began, Drew had rounded his westernmost point and was swinging homeward along the line of the canal cities with here and there a digression into the interior lake country or a dash toward Ontario or the St. Lawrence. Mrs. Austin had rejoined her admiral, Harriet filling her place, and Dick was expected to board the special at some as yet indefinite stop a day or two beyond. The crowds about the train's end increased from station to station, the meetings in the cities were nightly more enthusiastic, and even the reports of managers in partly Maddoxized districts took on a hopeful hue. The entire stock in trade of Drew's rival for the governorship was a calamity platform which Nature and the iron laws of economics were inexorably setting at naught. The end of the lean years was manifestly at hand, and as the illogical

many had blamed the ruling party with the hard times, so now they gave it credit for recurring prosperity.

Dick climbed aboard one afternoon out of a crowd where nobody dreamed of seeing him, and at an opportune moment between stations beckoned Drew aside.

"Philip," he said anxiously, "I would cut out the next stop if I were you."

"Cut Thermopylæ! Why do you advise that?"

"Haven't you seen this morning's papers?"

"A few minutes at breakfast, mainly to get ammunition from the other fellow's speeches. He's a mine of suggestion."

"You read nothing about the Adirondack & Southwestern strikers?"

"More riots?"

"They shot at a scab motorman just outside Thermopylæ yesterday afternoon and later burned a bridge. A few days ago we put a special correspondent into that territory, and last night he wired me that they were threatening trouble for you. Instead of going up the road to join you as I'd planned, I struck a bee-line for Thermopylæ, which I left this forenoon just in time to intercept you here. Don't speak there, Philip.

The town is full of drunken roughs who screen themselves behind the strikers."

Drew took a soiled sheet of letter-paper from his pocket as he listened.

"I understand this better now," he remarked quietly.

"What's that thing?"

"An anonymous letter. Dip into it.'

Harris ran it through, his eyes widening as he read.

"The curs!" he cried. "What are you to do?"

"Do! I'm going to read that letter to my audience in Thermopylæ."

"You'll speak there, anyhow?"

"I shouldn't be worth my salt if I backed down. It's the Maddox heelers who sent that warning. They want to see me cut out Thermopylæ, just as you advise, and then brand me a coward for doing it. I'll show them that they have barked up the wrong tree."

"By George, you're right!" said the nephew. "Does Katherine know?"

"There's little we don't share, boy," Drew answered, his black look vanishing. "She's a whole regiment at my back! Yes, Katherine knows what I intend doing, and she approves."

The sear fields of the autumn landscape were giving way to garden plots and the bedraggled outskirts of a factory town. The engine whistled.

"Thermopylæ!" Dick muttered, and squared his shoulders. "Well, whatever turns up, I mean to be in the rush-line of this historic scrap."

"You'll do me a better service if you'll undertake to keep your wife and Katherine out of possible harm's way, though candidly I don't expect those threatening whelps to lift a finger."

Dick's face lengthened.

"I say," he expostulated. "Somebody's got to look after you."

"Oh, I shan't be lonesome," Drew answered cheerfully. "There'll be the reception committee and the newspaper boys, not to mention the crowd."

When Dick had taken his disconsolate way toward the women, Drew suddenly felt his wife's arm slip round his neck.

"Oh, but this won't do, Katherine girl," he protested. "We're nearly there and Harriet—"

"I'm going back directly," she murmured. "I wanted you to feel — to know — oh, it's silly to be afraid, but if anything should happen, why, I — I love you, Philip, I love you so;" and with a kiss she was gone.

Drew went immediately into the observation compartment where the reporters were grouped, and a moment later was shaking hands with the Thermopylæ committee whom he followed to the platform, and a boisterous reception in which his ear detected catcalls intermingled with the cheers. Massed most densely about the train's end, the crowd stretched far down the tracks and even banked a line of freight-cars strung along a siding. It looked harmless in bulk, but, as one of the local politicians made the superfluous introduction, Drew here and there singled out a sullen or a vicious face.

"I received a letter this morning which ought to interest this audience," he began without preliminaries. "It is post-marked 'Thermopylæ,' is undated, and, I regret to say, unsigned: —

"'If you know whats helthy for you mister Money Bags Drew you wont make no Speach in Thermopylæ! Us folks has got our Bellyful of street-car Magnets and aint much particklar what we does. We *dinamited* 1 Car — look out for yourn! KEEP OUT! ! !'"

A profound quiet reigned while Drew slowly tore the paper to bits which he dropped contemptuously to the ground.

"I'm here," he commented tersely.

They applauded him so stormily and so long that Harriet's curiosity defeated Dick's and Katherine's nervous artifices to keep her in the dark, and drew them following after, convinced that the battle of Thermopylæ was won.

"I refuse to believe that this scurvy threat represents the sentiment of this or any other American community," Drew went on. "I refuse to believe furthermore that it voices the average judgment of the striking railway employees. Labor's substantial victories have never been won by riot, dynamite, and the torch. Neither will any political party gain by abetting anarchy. If Labor is to come by its just due, — and though no socialist, I believe that day will dawn, — it will not be through brickbats. If I, who have known what it means to work with the hands, am adjudged unfit to be governor of this state, Labor has its easy remedy. Vote me down if you will. Intimidate me you cannot."

They cheered him to the echo as he paused, but there were jeers too.

"Vote him down and knock him down!" yelled a voice.

Drew whirled to identify the speaker but a nearer menace caught his eye.

"Drop that stone, you loafer," he called, level-

ling his finger at a rough slouching beside a semaphore. "Drop that stone!"

The fellow's fingers relaxed, and the bystanders falling upon him with cuffs and kicks, he dodged from sight. An instant later he was forgotten. A shower of missiles from the freight-cars rained upon the platform around Drew who was seen to reel and fall.

CHAPTER XXXIV

ELECTION DAY was of an Indian summer mildness, and as Drew stood upon the upper terrace of "The Beeches" he could almost fancy the scene unchanged from the day of his first coming three years since. The haze hovered over Wolf's Head as then; the Hudson seemed unaltered; autumn lavished the same pigments upon the hills, the crescent shore, the garden — upon the ivy which scaled the dwelling's gray walls and fingered the leaded panes. A little boat, skimming the river as lightly as a gull which stooped begging in its wake, might easily be that of a girlish care-free Katherine, with her griefs, her joys, her love for him, all in the future. Then a twinge in his bandaged arm bridged past and present, and Katherine herself came to supplant the virginal figure of his memories.

"Do you know," he greeted her, "if it weren't for my broken arm, I'd have the cat-boat out? We would beat to Wolf's Head, hunt up the spot where we went overboard in the gale, and

run home by way of the little cove where the unhappy castaways drifted ashore."

They exchanged a long look of perfect understanding.

"It will do me good to row you over," Katherine broke the silence. "I've almost forgotten how."

"It's too long a pull for one."

"Not in the small cedar skiff."

"Even with the skiff."

"We'll compromise on the cove. You know we meant to loaf somewhere outdoors till sundown. If you like, we'll fish. The bass used to bite over there in a place I know. P-l-e-a-s-e!"

"Then let's," he laughed, meeting her mood. "We've been quite too sedate lately for a bride and groom. If you'll forage for a picnic lunch, I'll get somebody on the premises to dig for bait."

It was from every point of view a delectable excursion. It is true that the fish neglected to bite. It is true also that the lunch-basket fell into the river during an episode at the cove which is properly no part of this history. It must be admitted, too, that an invisible third person of a cynical turn would have condemned the talk as wholly wanting in the clearness, force, and elegance

which rhetoricians require of the educated. These several drawbacks, however, were more apparent than real. The unseemly behavior of the fish provoked no question as to the depth of Katherine's knowledge of the habits of bass; the luncheon which in final salvage was found to consist of raw potatoes, proved everything the most finical palate could ask when roasted in the embers of a drift-wood fire upon the beach; while the seemingly trivial conversation was in point of fact a medium of expression adequate beyond the cynical third person's imaginings.

As the sun dipped below the hills, they reëmbarked and followed the bend of the shore yet a little farther for the sake of the copper afterglow which burnished all the wide reach of the Hudson as it lay tranquil before the turning of the tide. All sounds carried with bell-like clearness. From a fleet of canal-boats amid stream came the wail of a concertina; from the hills the bay of a hound and the bleating of sheep; a lumber wagon betrayed its quality long before it reached the open stretch of public highway which skirted the bank a stone's cast away.

"Whoa!" said the driver, with a sociable inflection. "Good evenin', Governor Drew."

"Good evening!" Drew responded, recogniz-

ing a neighboring farmer. "Aren't you a trifle ahead of the returns?"

"Mebbe; but I'd bet dollars to doughnuts it's a safe guess. That there bandage on your arm was the great vote-getter. The critter who threw that brick didn't dream he was electin' a governor. Good night, sir. Hope I'm the first to congratulate?"

"You certainly are," Drew laughed. "Good night!"

Katherine bent silently to her oars, and they sped toward "The Beeches," whose gray walls Drew marked each minute melt deeper into their dusky background. Then lights began to pick out the dwelling's outlines; these signifying the library's oriel, those the hall, others his wife's apartments and the corner he had come already to feel peculiarly his own. It all spelled home to the man who had built and razed his numberless castles in the air, and it was upon this, his home, not the day's great lottery, that his thoughts ran to the measured tick of the rowlocks.

It was otherwise with the woman. During all the day they had been content to leave the election and its issue in abeyance. After the dust and din of conflict, the hideous moment of sus-

pense at Thermopylæ, and the trying days next following, which — doctor or no doctor — Drew had persisted in devoting to the campaign's last details, the peace of "The Beeches" was all-sufficient. Beyond the few telegraphic reports which had followed them here yesterday, politics had not intruded. The hail of the farmer in the highway was the battle's first echo, but it was enough to fire her fancy with a hundred images.

They were counting the votes now! Throughout the commonwealth, from the Adirondacks to the Narrows, from the sand dunes of Long Island to the thunder of Niagara, they were unfolding the ballots. Men of homely speech were swapping yarns and predictions about the village polling-places; the city bulletins were gathering their great audience of the year. She evoked the metropolitan throng which would converge upon Newspaper Row, and flood back past the dark mass of the post-office, past the City Hall, past Nathan Hale glorying in his martyrdom, even to Broadway. Then it was the bulletin of an up-town newspaper building, with green-eyed, unwinking bronze owls in its cornice, a blaze of electric theatre signs round about, the elevated trains roaring overhead, the surface cars turning a slow furrow through the dense pack below.

Again it was Madison Square, with its rival headquarters, its fireworks, its carnival antics and sounds, its serene golden goddess of the tower indifferent to all.

As they left the boat-house and climbed the lawn, she suddenly pressed Drew's uninjured arm.

"There's no forgetting now," she said. "I've been seeing New York, its election crowds, its lights! I can hardly wait."

"Would you rather we'd stayed in New York?"

"And missed to-day!"

"Or should I have had a special wire run over from town, brought in an operator, and asked a houseful of people?"

"No, no, it's better as it is — just you and I, with a single telephone message from headquarters when they really know. I wouldn't have it different to-night. Thanksgiving Day we'll fill the house. We'll ask Aunt Sue and the admiral, and Harriet and Dick, and the twins of course, and — who else, Philip?"

"I'd like to ask McQuade if you don't think he'd shock your aunt."

"Shock her! She dotes on rough diamonds. And there's somebody else. I'll give you three guesses."

"Redfern?"

"Nonsense."

"Maddox, then?"

"No, seriously. Some one we like. A benefactor."

"The man who married us?"

"No, stupid! I mean Dan."

"Oh," Drew said, "Dan the street arab."

"Dan the matchmaker," Katherine amended. "Dan Cupid! He told me that a fresh-air society sent him to the country once. He said, 'Me an' me brudder picked cross-eyed Susies.' I must have Dan."

"Dan, by all means."

"I've the menu all planned. We'll begin with grape-fruit in baskets — baskets made of the shell, you know; then a clear soup; green-pea timbales; baked bluefish with cucumber sauce; wild turkey — Philip, can you carve?"

"Better say haggle," he laughed.

"Wild turkey, cranberries, sweet potatoes, stuffed egg-plant; a crême-de-menthe sherbet; duck —"

"I never could carve a duck!" put in her husband.

"Duck with celery salad; burning mince pie

and cheese; frozen soufflé; and coffee. Is that worthy of the day?"

"Jove!" Drew exclaimed. "Do you suppose dinner's ready? You've given a naturally keen appetite the edge of a Toledo blade."

Katherine was seized with a laughing-fit which drove her to sit down on the doorstep and gasp for breath.

"I should have told you when cook warned me," she brought forth at last. "Now it's tragic."

"What is tragic?"

"Your dinner — your Excellency's dinner! The butcher has left us in the lurch, and you're going in for shepherd's pie, which is only poetic license for hash."

It proved the poetry of hash, in truth, and Drew refused to be frightened at Katherine's lurid pictures of what might occur in Albany with the Executive Mansion under her charge. He said little while she touched this possible life more seriously, and dwelt on the pleasure of a return to a spot endeared to her by countless associations with the Speddings; but when the meal was at an end, and they had begun the final wait before the library hearth, where a hickory log gave the beloved room its sole light, he also faced frankly the things which might lie before.

"Suppose I am elected," he questioned soberly. "Will it really settle anything? I can't rid my mind of that man's calling this bandage a vote-getter."

"Dick said something very like that at Thermopylæ. Why should you care? Who should profit by it if not yourself?"

"Would you have me an accidental governor?"

"Yes, if need be," declared his wife. "Is that a womanish confession?"

"It's a human confession."

"And it's human beings who will judge. Even if it should go by blind chance, and that ruffian's missile elect you, the people won't stop to reason it out. To them it will be simply a Drew victory and a Maddox defeat. But it hasn't been all blind chance," she argued earnestly, for she counted the speculative man behind the man of action an enemy whom it was her especial mission to rout. "It wasn't accident which made you a leader in your county, and won your street-railway fight, and caused Mr. Spedding to single you out for a greater battle. It was fitness, Philip, which made you Maddox's antagonist in the time of need, and which I believe has given you the victory to-day."

For a long interval the man was busy with his thoughts.

"Victory wouldn't mean peace," he commented finally. "It would mean still more battles, and an ending no one may guess."

Katherine slipped to a floor cushion beside his chair and clasped her fingers across his knee.

"I think it will mean President Drew," she said.

"Your boom is so early it will get frost-bitten."

She would not smile with him.

"I think," she added gravely, "that this room in which my father made his great renunciation will yet see you triumph where he failed. As a girl I would sit here dreaming of it, hoping, praying that his chance might come again. Now I shall dream, and hope, and work for another."

"My chance should have been his chance."

"No."

Something in her tone made him draw her closer. The proud head drooped in its supreme surrender.

"No," she murmured. "I would not have it other than it is."

The tall clock at the turn of the staircase leisurely struck nine with a quick pattering echo

from a cuckoo in the shadows above their heads.

"If the returns are coming in as usual, they know the truth at headquarters now," Drew said. "It would be more sensible for us to be planning against defeat. What do you say to Europe this winter? If we sail before the holidays, we can be in the Azores when my rival delivers his inaugural address."

"Then Spain and Algiers," smiled Katherine. "I must see Algiers this time."

"And Cairo, and the Nile — perhaps Constantinople."

"And Athens, and Rome, the Italian lakes in the spring. I know such a paradise on Como," she went on, kindling over her memories. "I can almost smell the oleanders! We'll stay in northern Italy till the summer drives us into Switzerland or the Tyrol, when we can make up our minds whether to do Russia and the North Cape, or work up toward Paris and London by way of the Low Countries."

"Defeat doesn't look so forbidding."

"Indeed it doesn't. When I think of Lake Como, I almost wish — "

The bell of the telephone in the hall tinkled faintly and then burst into a long sharp trill.

Europe's pleasant places were blotted from mind.

They rose hand in hand.

"It must be victory," Katherine whispered. "It must be victory."

"Yes, this is 'The Beeches,'" Drew said as he stood at the instrument, Katherine hanging upon every syllable. "Did you say New York? Yes, this is Drew. Drew! D-r-e-w, Drew. Oh, good evening! I didn't recognize your voice. This wire buzzes abominably. I said this wire — What's that? Yes — yes — yes. The state goes — Say that again. You don't mean it! Landslide? I should say so. Thank you, old man. Eh? Yes, we'll give the people a business administra —"

Whereupon "central" told New York that the connection had been abruptly broken at the new governor's end of the wire.

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